

Pocket Series }
No. 117. }

BEADLE'S

{ Illustrated,
{ Ten Cents.

POCKET NOVELS



Abdiel, the Avenger.



ABDIEL, THE AVENGER;

OR,

THE MADMAN OF THE MIAMI.

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NEW YORK:
BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET

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ABDIEL, THE AVENGER.

CHAPTER I.

A TRAITOR IN THE CAMP.

FIVE of them—Joseph Proctor, John McGinnis, Hugh Rallston, Henry Ewing, and Benjamin Pirtle—five stout and hardy young men, strong-limbed and strong-willed, skilled not only in hunting the game with which the forests and prairies abounded, but in the stubborn strife that was continually waged between the encroaching white men and the resistant Indians. All roughly but comfortably dressed, and armed with rifles, tomahawks and hunting-knives.

One other—Samuel Seavey—a middle-aged man, slightly stooping in his form, and with a cast of countenance that had caused the Indians to give him the nickname of Dog-face. Not the self-reliant expression of the mastiff, nor the dignified air of the Newfoundland, but the face of a bulldog, treacherous, brutal, bloodthirsty, tenacious, revengeful. His garb was the commonest homespun, and a cap of opossum-skin did not tend to lessen the resemblance of his head to that of a dog.

It was noon on a sultry day in the summer of 1780, and these men were resting from fatigue and the hot sunshine, in a shady hollow in the forest, on the north side of the Ohio.

Although they were in an enemy's country, they were far from the Shawnee towns, and believed that they had no cause to apprehend danger. They had built a fire, therefore, for the purpose of cooking their dinner; but it was a small fire, made with light and dry sticks, and the thin blue smoke could hardly be visible above the tree-tops. Some corn-cakes had been baked in the ashes, and some slices of venison were broiling on the coals, superintended by Seavey, to whom the duty of cooking appeared to have been delegated by the others.

The other five were sitting or reclining near the fire, waiting for their dinner, and conversing as they waited. The cook, although apparently attending to nothing but his duties, listened earnestly to what they said, and his small eyes glittered every now and then, and his lips moved as if he were muttering to himself.

"I don't think it 's worth while to go any further," said Hugh Rallston. "It seems to me that we have come on a fool's errand, and the sooner we quit and go home the better it will be for us. Afoot, as we are, we can't reasonably expect to overtake mounted Indians, especially when they had eight hours the start of us."

"Thar's two sides to that question, Hugh," remarked Joe Proctor. "Thar was eighteen or twenty Injuns, and they only got eight hosses from us. It stands to reason that they couldn't all ride."

"Couldn't they ride double, Joe?"

"'Twould be to'able hefty on the hosses. They would have to go slow or break down right soon. And then thar would be some left afoot."

"But they might ride and tie."

"They mought do a heap o' things that they don't do. It's my notion that they're a sight less than fifty mile ahead of us. A hoss is no better than a man for long tramps. I'd engage to beat any man's hoss, day in and day out, through these woods, and to wear the critter out in the cend."

"Even as you put it, Joe, they can reach the towns on the Miami, with the start they have, before we can hope to overtake them."

"Are you right sartin that they had sich a start?"

"Seavey says so. He was in charge of the horses when they were stolen, and he ought to know something about it."

"I think I ought to say, right here, that I ain't nigh as keen to believe what that chap says as some of you seem to be."

Seavey's attentive ear caught this last sentence, and he darted a malicious glance at the speaker.

Joe Proctor, ever wide-awake, with his eyes squinting in all directions, did not fail to notice this glance, and his voice

dropped to a lower key, while his companions drew closer to him, as if surprised at his statement, and anxious to hear the reasons with which he might support it.

"Seavey was in charge of the hosses, true enough," he said. "The pastur' was a leetle over a mile from the station. When the Injuns came, he ran away and left the hosses. He can't be blamed for that; but I don't see why he shouldn't have run right to the station, 'stead of stayin' out in the woods four or five hours. He said that the Injuns chased him and that he had to hide; but it seems to me, as he was runnin', that the nearest hidin'-place would have been the station. More'n that, boys—though this is somethin' that I ain't exactly sartin' about—I noticed his tracks from the pastur'. I didn't have time to foller 'em up; but I know that they started in a strait chute for the station."

"Do you suppose that he lied about the time that had passed since the horses were stolen, or that he was simply mistaken about it?" asked Henry Ewing, a fine-looking young borderer, who had been listening with the deepest interest to the statement of the stalwart scout.

"Don't think he could have been skeered into any sich a mistake. It's my notion that he came right away to the station arter the hosses war stolen, and that he lied about the time. If he did, what did he do it fur?"

"Do you suppose that he could have been in league with the Indians?" asked Ewing.

Proctor's voice sunk to a whisper as he replied:

"I don't want to say any thin' ag'in' any man until I know it fur sartin. But I may say this—when I was a prisoner up in Detroit, a year or so ago, I saw a man thar who was jest as much like Seavey as Seavey ain't like any other man. And it's my conclusion that that chap needs watchin'."

During the latter part of this conversation, Seavey was closely occupied in attending to the broiling venison. He could not, without attracting attention, change his position so as to get near enough to the speakers to hear what they said, but he had heard enough to convince him that they were talking about him. There was a dark frown on his brow and a red light in his eyes, while his lips curled up so as to show his white and sharp teeth.

When he had turned over the venison on the coals, he took a small package from a pocket of his long vest or "jacket," and sprinkled a brown powder on all the slices except one. As his back was turned to the rest of the party, this action was not observed by any of them.

As Proctor arrived at his "conclusion," the cook turned around, and informed the men that their dinner was ready.

"Not a bit more ready than we are," said Rallston. "I am hungry enough to eat an ox. Let us finish it, boys, and then we had better get on the trail again, and make up for lost time."

"After me is manners," remarked Seavey, with an unpleasant grin, as he helped himself to a slice of the venison and a corn-cake. This piece of impertinence was not resented by the others, who hastened to help themselves, and the meat and bread began to disappear rapidly.

"It seems to me that this meat has a bitter taste," said Ewing, who was eating his dinner with a little more deliberation than the others used. "Do you notice it, Hugh?"

"Yes; there is a queer taste about it. Have you been putting gunpowder on it, Sam, in place of salt?"

"Didn't put nothin' on it," replied the cook. "'Pears to me that it is a little bitter, though. I've heern tell that buck meat do sometimes have a queer taste, at this time o' year."

The bitterness of the meat was noticed by the rest of the party; but, as all were very hungry, the slightly unpleasant taste did not interfere with their appetites, and they made an end of all the venison that had been cooked.

Strangely enough, though all had agreed with Hugh Rallston that they ought to get on the trail again as soon as possible, they were in no hurry to bestir themselves. A spirit of laziness appeared to possess them all, and those who were smokers drew out their pipes, and filled and lighted them.

An unaccountable drowsiness crept over those strong and healthy men, usually so active and wide awake. One after another succumbed to its influence, and lay stretched on the sward, in deep and deathlike slumber.

"What in thunder's the matter?" exclaimed Joe Proctor, starting to his feet and rubbing his eyes. "I never felt so sleepy in all my born days. What does it mean?"

"That's more'n I kin tell," replied Seavey. "I declar' to gracious that I can't keep my eyes open another minute."

With these words he sunk back upon the ground, and seemed to slumber with the rest.

"Thar's suthin' wrong about it," muttered Proctor. "'Tis mighty strange that all the boys should be laid out at once in this way. I *must* keep awake, 'cause I'm sartin that thar's some devilment afoot."

He walked about, stamping his feet, swinging his arms, and beating his breast, striving to shake off the influence of the drowsy god. He strove in vain, and in a few moments was stretched out on the ground with his companions.

As soon as Proctor had fallen asleep, Sam Seavey raised himself to a sitting posture, and his mouth was spread in a grin of satisfaction as he looked around upon the inanimate figures.

"I reckon they will stay thar a while," he muttered, "and I will have what mought be called a surprise ready fur 'em when they wake up."

He walked about quietly, carefully examining each, and then took up his rifle, and disappeared in the shades of the forest.

CHAPTER II.

THE DESTROYER A SAVIOR.

SEAVEY had been gone about fifteen minutes.

The five young men were still wrapped in their deathlike slumber, and lay silent and motionless.

The stillness of the grave was all about them, broken only by the chirping of birds or the barking of squirrels.

The sun, slowly moving toward the west, was continually flecking them with changing patches of light and shadow; but the figures that were stretched on the ground gave no sign of life.

A heavy step was heard among the trees, crushing the dry leaves and sticks, and a new actor appeared upon the scene

This was an old man, considerably above the usual height, and of a build that denoted the possession of great strength. His long gray hair hung down upon his shoulders, and his long gray beard fell over his breast and reached to his waist. His face was bronzed and emaciated; but the features were fine, and his dark eye blazed with a wild and unnatural luster.

He was clothed entirely in deer-skin, which had been well dressed and made into comfortable garments, not without a certain air of style that recalled the fashions of a late day. On his head was a covering of the same material, with the fur left on the skin, shaped in a close resemblance to the cocked hat that was then generally worn.

"Verily the evil spirit is uppermost," he said, as he stepped down into the hollow, and looked at the silent group on the ground. "These young men have fallen victims to the treachery of one whom they trusted, and he has even now gone to bring the Philistines down upon them, that they may be bound in their sleep, and given over to destruction. The red savages will soon be here, and I must act quickly, if I am to save them from torture and death."

He shook the sleepers, endeavoring to arouse them from their deep and unnatural slumber; but the effort was ineffectual. He nodded his head, glanced in the direction that Seavey had taken, and then, lifting one of the young men bodily, took the helpless burden upon his back, and bore it away.

Through the woods he went, up a steep incline, to a rocky ledge. Then over and among the rocks, to the base of a cliff not more than fifty feet high, in which there was a hole, large enough for a man to enter.

Laying the body on the ground, he crawled into the hole, and then dragged it in after him. Having disposed of it to his satisfaction, he came out, and hastened down into the valley, where he picked up another of the unconscious sleepers, and carried him to the cliff. In this manner he proceeded until the five young men were safely deposited within the hole in the rock.

This was, in reality, a herculean task, and the old man staggered and panted as he ascended the slope and made his way over the rocks with his burdens; but when his labor was

finished, he showed no sign of exhaustion, and did not seem to require rest.

When he had drawn in the last body, he raked the ashes from some embers, and kindled a torch, by the light of which a large, rude and irregular cavern became visible, the floor and sides showing where the hammer or chisel had been used to chip off points and rough edges of rock.

A rude bed had been made in one corner, and many skins of fur-bearing animals were scattered about, on which were lying the senseless forms of the five young men.

Their preserver—if they were preserved—looked at them, examined them carefully, one by one, and made sure that they were yet alive.

"Fine young men," he muttered. "Splendid fellows; but their thews and sinews are worthless to them now. What can they have been doing in the country of their enemies, surrounded by savages? Satan has been at work upon them by one of his agents, and I will be the instrument in the hands of Providence to protect them."

He then crawled out of the cavern, and busied himself, for a few minutes, among the rocks in front of it. When he crawled back, he held a powder-horn in his hand, with which he laid a train of powder, terminating it just inside of the cavern.

His next move was to take his rifle and the five rifles which he had brought up from the hollow, to carefully examine the priming and the flints, and to lay them in order near the narrow entrance, where he seated himself, in a position that commanded a view of the slope and the hollow below.

He was ensconced in his fortress with arms and ammunition at hand, and appeared to await the approach of an enemy.

The enemy that he expected was not far distant.

About half an hour after the old man had carried the last of his burdens up to the cavern, Samuel Seavey approached the hollow from the north, followed by a dozen half-naked savages, whose breasts and arms, as well as their faces, were plentifully smeared with the Shawnee war-paint.

They came on stealthily, with noiseless tread, slipping from tree to tree, as if creeping upon unsuspecting foes. Those foes, as they believed, were wrapped in a slumber from which

they could not be easily awakened, and the Shawnees were confident that they had nothing to fear; but these considerations did not induce them to forego their customary craft and caution.

Not until they reached the bottom of the hollow, where the five young men had lately lain in a deathlike stupor, did the slightest sound escape from their lips.

The foremost warrior uttered a guttural "ugh!" as his eyes rested on the vacant spot, and looked inquiringly at Seavey, who stood aghast, incapable of any thing but a vacant stare.

"What does this mean?" asked the Shawnee, in the language of his race. "Has Dog-face lied to us? He said that we would find the Long-knives sleeping in this place, but they are not here."

"I can not understand it," replied Seavey, in the same dialect. "I know that I left them here, not more than an hour ago. I have told Night-Hawk nothing but the truth. I sprinkled on their meat the powder that Captain Dutith gave me, and it made them sleep. They should have slept at least three hours. Perhaps some of their friends have found them, and have taken them away."

"Dog-face has spoken wisely. If the Long-knives have awaked, or if their friends have found them, they may be not far away, and we must be careful. Night-Hawk will look for sign."

After giving some directions to the other Indians, who held themselves in readiness to meet an attack from any quarter, the warrior proceeded to examine the ground near the ashes of the fire.

He easily found the trail of the old man who had carried away the sleepers, and perceived that it was a single trail—the tracks of but one pair of feet. Those tracks were frequent, going and coming over the trail, and had been deeply printed in the earth, showing that the owner of the feet had been heavily burdened. The Shawnee had no hesitation in arriving at the conclusion that the five white men had been taken away by one man, who could not have carried them far. He pointed to the direction in which the trail led, and beckoned to the other warriors to follow him.

The same caution that had been used by the Shawnees

when they approached the hollow, were observed by them as they ascended the slope that led to the old man's cavern. They moved stealthily, availing themselves of the cover of the trees, and keeping on the alert for an enemy or an ambuscade; but their advance was not interfered with, and they neither saw nor heard any thing to arouse their suspicions, until they had nearly reached the cavern, when the old man addressed them in their own tongue, ordering them to halt, and asking what they wanted.

Somewhat startled, the Shawnees fell back a little, and most of them sought cover. Seavey, who had carefully kept in the rear during the ascent, dodged down behind a rock, anxious to get out of sight, as well as out of harm.

Night-Hawk, from behind a tree that he had interposed between himself and the hole in the rock, held a parley with the occupant of the cavern, who could be heard but not seen.

"We are looking for white men," he said, "who were lying down there in the hollow, and who have been taken away."

"They are here," replied the old man.

"We want them."

"You may want them, then, as long as you live; for you shall not have them. The Great Spirit has delivered them out of your power, and has given them into my care, and I will protect them."

"Who are you, and what are you doing in the country of the Shawnees?"

"Do you ask who I am? I am Abdiel, the Destroyer, who was sent to subdue the evil spirits of the wilderness. The strength of the Shawnees shall melt before me, and the cunning of the Delawares shall come to naught. Yea, they shall be utterly consumed, as the dry grass when the west wind drives the flame. Hence, ye painted demons! Fly, before the power comes upon me that I can not resist, and I rend you limb from limb, as the lion of the mountains devours the tender fawn!"

This, although spoken in their own language, was "Greek" to the Shawnees, who naturally judged that the speaker must be insane. With their habitual reverence—although that word does not rightly describe the sentiment—for one whom

the Great Spirit has deprived of reason, they did not notice the threat that was evidently contained in the old man's speech, and hesitated as to what they should do.

"He is a white man, and is alone," suggested Seavey, in a half-whisper. "He has dragged the five men up to that hole, and they are asleep in there. It is easy to get him out of the way, and to go in and capture them before they awake. Is Night-Hawk afraid to do it?"

"Perhaps Dog-face had better go in and take them," replied the Shawnee, in a contemptuous aside. He then addressed himself to the old man.

"Those white men are our prisoners. They belong to us, and we must have them."

The answer was hurled back, hoarse and angry, from the hollow of the rock.

"Dog of a Shawnee! come and take them if you dare!"

Such a bold defiance, from one man to a dozen, was too much for savage human nature to endure patiently, and several shots were fired at the hole in the cliff.

A mocking laugh resounded from the opening, as the bullets pattered harmlessly against the rock.

The Shawnee leader, indignant at being thus derided, directed the warriors to reload, and to follow him in a charge upon the old man's fortress. It was supposed that they would draw his fire at once, and would be able to get in and overpower him before he could fire again.

Night-Hawk sounded his war whoop as a signal for the onset, which was answered by the fierce yells of his followers, and all rushed together toward the cavern. Not a shot was fired at them, and nothing was done to prevent their advance.

They were collected in a huddle at the entrance, into which they were firing their guns, preparatory to forcing their way into the chamber in the hill, when the light of a torch gleamed in the darkness of the opening, and a stream of fire ran out over the rocks.

Then there was a dull, heavy explosion, and the earth seemed to open under their feet. A dense cloud of smoke and dust rushed upward, carrying with it a mass of broken stone, mixed with red bodies and fragments of bodies.

Screams and groans from the wounded and dying ensued, with yells from the frightened and furious survivors, and over all arose the wild and mocking laugh of the old man who had proclaimed himself as Abdiel, the Destroyer.

CHAPTER III.

THE RED SWARM.

RALLSTON'S STATION, on the west bank of the Licking, was composed of twelve stout log houses, joined end to end, in two parallel lines. Between the rows was an open space of about thirty yards wide, forming a parallelogram, two sides of which were bounded by the houses, and the other two were closed in by palisades of heavy logs, set deep in the ground. The eastern palisades were near the river bank, and at the western end was a gate formed of heavy timbers. The buildings at the south-east and south-west angles were two stories in height, with the upper story projecting over the under, so that riflemen in each could command two sides of the parallelogram, and could prevent an enemy from effecting a lodgment under the house.

In front of the southern row of houses, near the close of day, several men and women were sitting or standing. Among them were Colonel Rallston and his wife, the former tall and dignified, the latter stout and matronly. Solomon Steele and his wife were another couple, and resembled each other in being tall, lean and angular, with sallow complexions, browned and hardened by exposure.

Sol Steele, as well as his Lucinda, had passed the meridian of life, and in his black locks, as well as in hers, were many streaks of gray. He was dressed in a homespun hunting-shirt and leggings and her only visible garment was a coarse, home-woven gown. His hands rested on the muzzle of his long rifle—a trusty friend, from which he was never parted. In her mouth was stuck a cob pipe, with a short cane stem, which was her almost inseparable companion. The rugged features

of each wore a thoughtful, contemplative expression, and Colonel Rallston was listening attentively to the words of the old hunter.

"I wish the boys hadn't gone," Steele was saying. "I don't allow that they could do any manner o' good by goin' arter them hosses, and they mought run into danger. But young folks are apt to be hard-headed, as well as hot-headed, and thar was no use in talkin to 'em."

"They may overtake the Indians and get back the horses," suggested Colonel Rallston. "I hardly know how we would get along without a horse at the station."

"Men's lives are wuth more 'n hosses. I hope the boys won't try to cross the Ohio."

"Why so?"

"'Cause thar's too many resks to be run over yonder. I know the boys are brave, and stout, and actyve, and every one of 'em is a fighter; but the Shawnees are all that, too. And then ag'in, thar's no knowin' how soon thar help might be needed here at home."

"Do you suppose that we can be in any danger here? 'The Indians got what they came for. They have stolen our horses and have gone back to their own country. It is not likely that that they will come again soon."

"Those Injuns may not come, but others may, and some of 'em may be lyin' out in the woods now. I'm kinder suspicious about the way that hoss-stealin' job was done. It makes me doubtful whether they got all they come fur, and whether it warn't jest a blind to kiver another stroke. I saw Injun sign out at the southard this mornin', and that's the reason I didn't keep on huntin'."

"Indian sign! I wish I had known it sooner."

"I hev jest come in, colonel, and coaldn't hev told ye much sooner."

"It was just after dinner that I let the girls go out to gather berries."

"What gals?"

"My daughter, Emma, and Laura Wingate."

"Jerewsalem! Anybody go with 'em?"

"Walter Coleman and Billy Linn."

"Nigh about nobody. Any folks out in the corn patches?"

"There are several men at work there. They were at work all the morning, and went out again after dinner."

"This won't begin to do, colonel. You must send out and call the men in, and no more work must be done until we take a scout fur miles around the station. Fur my part, I mean to go and look arter them gals."

Mrs. Rallston was greatly troubled by the ominous words of the hunter, and her husband was hardly less so. He threw open the great gate, and directed a young man to go out and call in the people who were working in the corn-patches. Then he went to get his rifle, declaring that he would go out with Sol Steele to look for the girls.

In front of the gate was a narrow piece of cleared and cultivated ground, that extended up the river about half a mile, and the same distance down the river. In this cleared strip were the patches of growing corn in which the men were working. Beyond it was the dense forest that intervened between the river and the prairie or "barren" land.

The three men had just passed out at the gate, when several shots were fired from the forest, and the shots were followed by the known and dreaded yells of the savages. The next instant a number of Indians rushed out from the concealment of the timber, yelling and shooting as they ran, endeavoring to interpose themselves between the white laborers and the station.

But the men who were in the corn-patches had gone armed to their work, and had wisely refrained from scattering. At the firing of the first shot they picked up their rifles, and, in obedience to the commands of a recognized leader, came together, and began a hasty but orderly retreat toward the station.

As soon as the alarm was given at the station, the men who were left there seized their weapons, and sallied out, under the lead of Colonel Rallston, to protect their friends and bring them in.

The Indians, perceiving this demonstration, and unwilling to be caught between two fires, ceased their movement toward the station, and turned upon the party they had first attacked; but the white men presented a steady front to their enemies, at the same time retreating rapidly toward those

who were hastening to meet them. Then the two parties came together, and were able to assume the aggressive, compelling the savages to fall back in their turn.

As soon as the junction had taken place, the woods seemed to be alive with Indians, who came out from the wood, in swarms, and scampered over the cleared space, intent upon exterminating the little band that was opposed to them.

The white men fired a final volley, to keep their nearest foes at a distance, coolly reloaded, and then turned and ran to the stockade, closing the gate behind them before their foes could again get within range. Two of the men who had been at work in the corn patches were wounded, but were safely brought into the stockade.

There were but twenty-one men at the station, including the wounded men and two negroes, to meet the cloud of Indians that had issued from the forest, and they had no time to ask questions, or to consult upon a plan of action. Each man, however, knew his place and his duty, and each sprung to take his place and to do his duty.

Not only the men, but the women also, were quick to assist in the defense of the station. Without needing any orders or directions, some brought ammunition to those who needed it, some loaded spare muskets and rifles, and some began to melt lead and to run it in the bullet-molds. Sol Steele's wife, for once laying aside her cob pipe, took her place at the stockade with a rifle in her hands. Even the two wounded men, at their own request, were assisted up into the block-houses, where they were seated at loop-holes, with the women at hand to load their rifles.

There was no noise or excitement, no flurry or sign of fear. All knew that the odds against them were great, such as their utmost exertions might not be able to overcome; but all were calm, cool and collected, going about the work of defense against a merciless foe, as if they were proceeding with the ordinary business of their lives. Mrs. Rallston was nearly broken down by grief at the probable loss of her daughter; but she strove to repress her feelings, and to cheer and inspirit the rest. Her husband was gloomy and sad; but his face wore a look of fierce determination, as if

he meant to take vengeance, then and there, for what had happened or might happen to his child.

Few as they were, the defenders of the station had a great advantage over their opponents in the strength and security of their fortress. The solid logs of the houses and of the stockade were bullet proof, and it was hardly possible, except with the aid of ladders, to climb over or upon them. It was such a distance from the station to the woods, that the assailants would hardly attempt to carry combustibles across the cleared ground, under the fire of their adversaries. There was no other chance to fire the buildings, except by shooting combustibles upon the roofs, and the whites were prepared against that danger, as they had a deep well and two cisterns within the station. In the cleared ground no trees had been deadened and left standing, but all the stumps had been cut as low as possible, so that they might afford little, if any, shelter to the enemy in case of an attack.

The Indians came on at a run, spreading out as they advanced, and attacking the station on three sides. A man in the uniform of a British officer could be seen among them, urging them on and directing their movements.

Although there were but seven men on a side to oppose them, they were met by a rapid and steady fire, that staggered them and checked their advance. The white people knew that this was the crisis of their fate, and that the Indians, if once driven back, would not be likely to risk another assault. Every man fought, therefore, not only for life, but as if the lives of all the inmates of the station depended on his individual efforts, and the women strained every nerve to assist and inspire their defenders. Not a man was suffered to be idle a moment from lack of ammunition, and all who were able busied themselves in reloading the rifles as fast as they were discharged.

By means of their vigorous and united action, they were enabled to keep up an incessant fire from the stockade and the houses, doing nearly the work of double their force. Every rifle, also, was carefully aimed, and very few shots were thrown away. Protected by the stout logs, and firing through narrow loop-holes, the white men were in absolute security; while their adversaries, as they advanced over the cleared ground,

were continually presenting themselves as targets for the unerring rifles.

The Indians had no hope of success but in overpowering their opponents by the force of numbers and a quick rush. They hoped, after drawing the fire of the station, to run in and accomplish their purpose before the white men could reload; but in this they were mistaken, as there was not the slightest cessation in the fire, and they were compelled to meet the same pitiless storm of bullets at every step of the way.

This was too much for Indian human nature to stand. They found their numbers rapidly diminishing, while they were inflicting, as far as they could perceive, no damage upon their antagonists. Their rapid advance was at first staggered, then checked here and there, and then stopped entirely, and they turned and fled in confusion, hardly pausing to pick up and carry away their dead and wounded.

The gate in the western stockade had been the chief objective point of the assault, and it was reached by nearly a dozen warriors, who, imagining that they were sheltered by the stockade, endeavored to cut and beat it down with their tomahawks.

But this possibility had been guarded against, and two more riflemen had already been sent up into the north-western block-house, from the upper story of which such a fire was opened as soon made it too hot for the Indians at the gate, who scampered away as fast as their legs would carry them, dodging, jumping and twisting their bodies about, in the hope of avoiding bullets that were sent after them.

CHAPTER IV.

WHO WAS CAPTAIN DUTITH?

SATISFIED with the repulse they had given the savages, the white people rested from their labor, but only to prepare for another possible struggle, by cleaning their weapons and getting ready their supplies of ammunition. The hurts of those who had been wounded in the corn-patches were attended to, and it was discovered that only one man had been slightly grazed by a bullet during the attack on the station.

Mrs. Rallston went into her own house and shut herself up, that she might indulge in secret the grief with which she was unwilling to trouble the others. The men, as they came from their posts of danger, met and congratulated each other on their successful defense. Lucinda Steele laid down her rifle, and resumed her cob pipe.

"We are safe for the present," said Colonel Rallston, stopping where Sol Steele was wiping out his rifle. "They won't be likely to make another attack before the dark hour of the morning."

"Nor then, I'm thinkin'. I reckon they've got enough of it, colonel. I never saw any better work than the shootin' we did from behind these logs."

"Every man did his duty. I now see what saved us, and am glad that we were wise in time."

"Tis a good thing that them stumps war cut down eluss."

"It is a good thing that our little garrison was so perfectly drilled that every man went to his place at once."

"All that wouldn't have saved us, colonel, if the women folks hadn't been willin' and able to help."

"That is true indeed, and none did better work than your wife. She is as good a man as the best of us."

Mrs. Steele took the pipe from her mouth and blew a cloud of smoke in acknowledgment of this compliment.

"'Cindy has seen enough o' sich work to know suthin about it," remarked the hunter. "Did you take notice o' that British ossifer, old gal?"

Lucinda's dark eyes blazed as she replied :

" Yes. I had a bead drawed onto him more'n once ; but the sneakin' wolf wouldn't come nigh enough."

" Did you allow that he mought be anybody in partic'lar that you know'd of?"

" Arthur Dutith."

" That's what I took him to be. My old rifle was jest tchin' fur a fa'r shot at him, but didn't git it."

" Arthur Dutith?" exclaimed Colonel Rallston. " Is it possible? I thought there was a resemblance, but did not believe that it could be he."

" Do you know him, colonel?"

" I have known so much of him, that I wish to know nothing more. What have you had to do with him?"

" Too much, colonel. We was settled on the Monongahely—'Cindy and me, with our one chile, which was a gal. She was the likeliest gal in them parts, and was so purty as a pictur', though you mought not think it, lookin' at 'Cindy and me. Arthur Dutith—he called himself captain—was a Carada half-breed, as I take it, and was actin' as some sort of an agent fur the Gov'ment, among the Injuns. He often came to see our gal, and we let him come, as we didn't know any harm of him, and he kep' comin' until one day he and the gal war missin'. It turned out that they had gone off together ; but I couldn't git the least track of 'em. At last the gal came back alone ; but she was so crazy that she couldn't tell us nothin', except that Dutith had desarted her. We took keer of her, and watched her as class as we could ; but she got to the river one mornin', and the Monongahely swallowed her up with all her sorrers."

The hunter drew the rough sleeve of his hunting-shirt across his eyes, and his wife puffed out a great cloud of smoke.

" You have cause to remember the man," said Colonel Rallston

" I swore that I would be the death of the sneakin' wolf, as 'Cindy calls him, and I have been tryin' ever sence to git on his trail. I could hear of him now and then ; but it seemed that I could never reach him. Whar did you meet him, colonel?"

"In Virginia. My plantation was on James river, and he came into the neighborhood soon after the beginning of the war. No one knew any thing about him, except that he dressed well, and that he had plenty of money; but he soon became acquainted with the Tory families, and was made welcome at their houses. He saw my daughter Emma, and made no secret of saying that he had fallen in love with her; but Emma disliked him, and it is not to be supposed that I would favor the pretensions of a man about whom nothing was known except that he was a friend of Tories. I ordered him to keep away from my house; but he persisted in coming, until my son Hugh was provoked into flogging him for his impertinence. Then it came out that he was a spy in the pay of the British, and that his business there was to organize a conspiracy among the Tories. The patriots rose for the purpose of crushing the conspiracy, and Dutith fled the country, taking some of the leading Tories with him. He was heard to say, before he left, that he would be revenged upon me and Hugh, and that he would yet get possession of my daughter."

"'Cordin' to that, colonel, it ain't a hard matter to guess what he's here fur now. I heerd that he was with the British, up at Detroit; but I couldn't see my way to git at him thar. He has been spyin' about among these settlements, no doubt, and has found out that you had stuck your stakes hereabout. You know what them half-breeds are—mean and treacherous as snakes, never furgivin' or furgittin' a grudge, and never losin' sight of a trail that they've once got onto. He has found it easy enough to git the Injuns to foller him down here, and he has come arter your gal, among other things."

"He has succeeded, then. He has got her," exclaimed Colonel Kelston, in tones of anguish.

"Easier than he calkilated on, I reckon. We may as well give that up fur a fact. It's my belief that that hoss-stealin' job was a plan of his to git part of our folks out of the way."

"I could better bear the thought of my daughter's death, than that she should be in the power of such a scoundrel. What can be done, Sel?"

"Nothin' at all, jest now. In the mornin' we may make some sort of a start at suthin'; but it's hard sayin' what it may be, as the red-skins are too many fur us. I don't reckon they will try to hit us ag'in. Datith would be glad to wipe out the station, like enough; but the Injuns will be apt to think that green persimmons ain't wuth pickin'. I can say this much, colonel, for sartin—all that one man, and that's me, can do will be done to git your darter back."

"T'other one, too," suggested Lucinda Steele.

"Poor Laura Wingate!" exclaimed Colonel Rallston. "Orphan as she is, without a relative in the world, I feel toward her as if she were my own child."

"T'other one, too, of course," rejoined Sol Steele. "And you musn't forgit that I've got no small bit of a bone to pick with that Captain Datith, myself. I reckon we had better make things safe fur the night, colonel, and let all turn in who ain't needed."

Sentinels were duly placed, and all proper arrangements were made to guard against a surprise or to meet another attack; but nothing was heard of the Indians during the night, except a horrid howling at one time, indicating that they were mourning their dead who had fallen in the fight before the station.

When the morning sun rose, not a sign of the savages was visible. They had destroyed such patches of corn as were out of range of the station, but had not ventured to molest any of the others, having a wholesome dread of the rifles of the settlers.

The Indians had evidently decamped, and in their place appeared a mounted party, which proved to be fifty men from the settlements near Limestone, led by Captain Hugh McGary, a gentleman of undoubted bravery, but whose courage was not always tempered by judgment and caution.

"What has brought you all here, this morning?" asked Colonel Rallston, when he had thrown open the gate and welcomed the strangers to the station.

"We were afraid that you were having trouble down this way," replied McGary. "Some of our scouts found the trail of a large party of Indians, who were heading in this direction, and we thought it likely that they meant to strike this

station. So we mounted, and came here as fast as our horses would carry us."

"We are greatly obliged to you," said Rallston; "but the danger is over now, if the trouble is not. The Indians have done as much damage as they could do, and have left the neighborhood."

Colonel Rallston then proceeded to give his visitors an account of all that had happened in that vicinity, from the stealing of the horses to the attack on the station.

"We are not too late to be of use," said McGary. "The red rascals must have started about dawn, if they have really left the neighborhood. Let us follow them at once. My men are freezing for a fight. What do you suppose the force of the Indians to have been?"

At least a hundred warriors, was the opinion of those at the station, and McGary declared that his force, with those who could be spared from the station, was amply able to defeat them. All were not of his opinion, as it was known that the Indians were nearly, if not quite, as well armed as the white men, that they were equally skilled in the use of their weapons, and better acquainted with woodcraft and the peculiar style of warfare that made them such dangerous foes to the settlers.

But McGary was impetuous and ardent, and Colonel Rallston was anxious to do every thing that might be done toward accomplishing the rescue of his daughter and Laura, and it was agreed that they should start in pursuit of the savages, as soon as the visitors could rest and get their breakfast.

CHAPTER V.

THE CRIMSON TRAIL.

IN one particular, Captain McGary consented to be governed by the advice of Sol Steele, although he chafed at the delay that it involved. Scouts were sent into the woods in advance of the party, to ascertain whether the Indians had

really left the vicinity, and they reported that the coast was clear in all directions, and that nothing was left of the Indians but their trail, which was broad and plain, leading toward the north.

The scouts had not progressed far, when they found the bodies of Walter Coleman and Billy Linn, boys of sixteen and twelve, who had accompanied the girls when they went out to gather berries.

Information of this discovery was at once sent back to the main body, and all hastened forward to witness the confirmation of their fears. The boys had been scalped, and their bodies were shockingly mangled. They were lying at a considerable distance apart, as if they had separated in the attempt to escape.

The tracks of the young ladies were also found, mingled with those of the moccasined feet of the savages. They, also, had endeavored to escape, but had been overtaken and captured without a struggle.

There was no hesitation now. Colonel Rallston, in his desire to punish the Indians and recapture the girls, was as impetuous as McGary, and even Sol Steele could hardly speak a word of caution. Two men were left behind to take care of the bodies of the boys, and the others pressed forward in pursuit. Scouts were sent in advance as before; but the main body pushed on so rapidly that this precaution was of little avail.

It was evident that the Indians were retreating slowly, as if they had no fear of pursuit, but were rather inclined to court it. Sol Steele was of the opinion that their trail was entirely too broad and plain, indicating that they wished to be followed, and that they would make a stand at some place where all the advantages of position would be in their favor.

He mentioned his suspicions to Captain McGary, and urged that the advance should be conducted with more caution; but his advice only stimulated the latter to greater speed.

"A fight is what we want," said McGary. "The sooner they make a stand, the sooner we will have a chance to whip them. If we hurry forward, we can overtake and strike them before they have time to prepare to meet us."

In obedience to his orders, the mounted men rode on rap-

idly, leaving those who were on foot lagging behind, with a considerable distance between the two bodies of men.

Suddenly a few dropping shots told of the presence of an enemy in front, and the scouts came hurrying back to the main body. They had not far to go, as the mounted men had kept close upon their heels.

In a moment the woods were alive with yelling Indians, and from every tree a close and deadly fire was poured in upon the white men, which told on them with fearful effect as they were huddled together in the narrow trail.

As soon as the firing began, the men from the station hastened to the assistance of their friends, but discovered that the Indians had thrown themselves into the gap between them, and each body was compelled to fight separately and against odds.

To the mounted men their horses were a great annoyance and hindrance as soon as they reached the enemy. It was impossible for them to maneuver, and hardly possible to move, in the thick forest, and among the tangled undergrowth. Some of the horses stampeded, tearing their riders from their backs under the branches of the trees, or carrying them among the Indians, where the tomahawk and the scalping-knife soon made an end of them.

All dismounted who were able to do so, letting their horses run loose, and sought shelter behind the trees, imitating the mode of warfare adopted by their assailants. But the surprise they had hoped to effect was effected on the wrong side; the Indians were fully a match for them, man to man, at forest fighting; and their forces were outnumbered and divided from the start.

McGary and his men, as well as those from Rallston's station, stood up to their work manfully. Not one was willing to be the first to flinch or to cower, or even to propose a retreat. In fact, a retreat would have been a difficult maneuver to execute, with the two bodies separated and a strong force of Indians between them.

Still the woods resounded with the continued reports of the rifles and muskets, and the occasional clash of steel against steel—with the yells and shouts of the combatants, and the shrieks and groans of the dying and wounded. The numbers

of the fallen were about equal on both sides ; but the Indians were animated by the success of their surprise, by their superior numbers, and by the advantages they had gained so early in the action. They continued to press their antagonists back and to drive them into a smaller space, threatening to soon surround them with a line of fire.

Unless something could be done to change the fortunes of the fight, it was evident that the utter defeat of the white men was only a question of time. They might possibly inflict as much damage as they suffered ; but sooner or later, the last man of them must bite the dust.

Sol Steele comprehended the position of affairs, and resolved to make a desperate effort to break through the encircling line of savages.

At the signal he gave, the men from the station discharged their rifles with deadly effect, and made a determined rush, that carried them, in spite of all opposition, past the barrier of Indians, to where their friends were huddled together.

When the two bodies had joined, and were able to act in concert, they formed themselves, as near as possible, into a hollow square, and thus slowly forced their way back over the trail.

The Indians, enraged at the possibility of their foes slipping from their grasp, redoubled their efforts, and loaded and fired with the utmost rapidity, springing from tree to tree as they closed in on the line of retreat. But the white men held their ranks firmly, slowly and steadily falling back through the forest, and dealing death to all who were presumptuous enough to approach them too closely.

"Steady, men!" shouted Sol Steele, whose ringing voice was heard above the din of the conflict. "Don't throw away a shot! Hold 'em a leetle longer! Thar's a clear place a little ahead, and we can fix 'em thar."

Inspired by the voice and action of the resolute hunter, the retreating party kept their enemies at bay until they reached an open space across the timber, about a hundred yards in width, where a clearing had been commenced. Running across this space, they gained a position on the other side, where they were sheltered by the trees, and could shoot down all who attempted to cross.

The Indians in vain endeavored to outflank them, and a few warriors who started to drive them from their vantage ground bit the dust, as the penalty of their temerity. The remainder contented themselves with long-range practice, in which they were excelled by the white men, and with attempting by taunts and insults to draw their antagonists from their cover.

Among those who were conspicuous in this war of words was the white man in the uniform of a British officer whom Sol Steele had recognized at the station as Captain Dutith.

He had been by no means one of the foremost in the fight, and now kept himself ensconced behind a tree, while he sent his stinging words, instead of rifle-bullets, across the space that then separated the Indians and the settlers.

"Is that you, Colonel Rallston?" he shouted. "Are you looking for your daughter? You will have to follow me to Detroit, if you want to see her. I told you that she should be mine, and I have kept my word, and I am not done with you yet.

"I know you, Sol Steele!" he yelled again. "You would be glad to send a bullet through my heart; but you shall not have that pleasure just yet. You will join your daughter in the next world before I give you another chance."

At each of these taunts, the men who were addressed by him sent a vengeful bullet at him; but he was not hit, and he uttered his mocking laugh in derision of their efforts.

Colonel Rallston, pallid with anger, shook his fist impotently at his insolent foe.

"Steel can reach him, if lead won't touch him," muttered old Sol, as he rammed down another charge.

The firing across the cleared space was kept up for nearly an hour, at the expiration of which time the Indians, perceiving that they were suffering more than their adversaries were by this style of warfare, made an end of the combat, and gradually drew off toward the north. The whites, knowing that they could gain nothing by following them, waited until it was certain that they were really in retreat, and then came together, for the purpose of returning in a body to the station.

Sol Steele was standing at the edge of the clearing, gazing in the direction in which the savages had disappeared, when he felt a touch on his shoulder. He turned, and saw his wife standing there, with a rifle in her hand. Colonel Rallston was near them, gazing wistfully at both.

"Why, 'Cindy!" exclaimed the hunter. "What on airth are you doin' here?"

"Been takin' a hand in this scrimmage. What are you oin' to do now, Solomon?"

Sol Steele pointed toward the north.

"That's right. I knowed you would. But it's a hard job, Solomon."

"To tell the truth, 'Cindy, I don't see much chance ahead fur bringing them gals back; but I am bound to try, and you may be sure that I will do my best."

"I will go with you, my friend," said Colonel Rallston, who had approached them while they were speaking.

"Reckon not, colonel. The best thing fur you is to stay at home and take keer of what is left. I allow that I can do more alone, than I could with a party at my back. Nothin' less than an army would be of any use. Besides, I am to come across the boys who went arter the hosses, and they will help me, if I need any help."

"I have no doubt you are right, and I will follow your advice. I know that you will do every thing that you can do."

"You mought bet all the land in Kaintuck on that, and never lose an acre."

"I thank you for your kindness, from the bottom of my heart, and if I can ever reward you—"

"That'll do, colonel. You know that I've got an account to settle with that man, and I mean to settle it, if I have to follow him to Detroit, or into the heart of the British army. Good-by, colonel! Good-by, 'Cindy!"

"Good-by!" said the stout-hearted woman, as she grasped his rough hand. "Take car' o' yourself, old man, and may the Lord help ye!"

Sol Steele hastened across the clearing, and disappeared in the forest on the other side.

The white survivors of the combat proceeded to bury their

dead, to succor their wounded, and to regain such of their horses as had not been appropriated by the Indians. These tasks completed, they sadly returned to Rallston's station.

CHAPTER VI.

A BIG SURPRISE.

NIGHT-HAWK, the leader of the war party, was one of the Shawnees who were unhurt by the explosion of the old white man's mine. Bewildered, almost astounded, he turned as soon as the smoke and dust lifted, and shook his tomahawk savagely at the cavern. As he did so, a rifle cracked, and a bullet whistled close by his ear, causing him to retreat to the hollow in undignified haste.

Seavey, who had been ensconced in the shelter of a rock, executed some remarkable gyrations as he descended the slope, his speed being accelerated by a shot from the cavern.

The few remaining Shawnees were so thoroughly terrified, that they hastened out of sight of the scene of their disaster, even abandoning the wounded to their unseen foe.

The five young men who were lying on the floor of the cabin were partially aroused by the reports of the rifles and the noise of the explosion. Joe Proctor, who was the first to recover his consciousness, sat up, rubbed his eyes, and stared wildly about.

"What the blue blazes does this mean?" he muttered.

"The devil is to pay, sartin'; but I would like to know just what is up. Am I dead and buried, and is that the big noise that's to wake the dead and call 'em to judgment? I wish I'd knowed it a little sooner. Here's the boys, too, all of 'em in the same fix, and just beginnin' to stir."

As his eyes opened and became accustomed to the darkness, he perceived the outlines of the cavern, with its rude furniture, and the old man seated near the entrance, whose features the flaring torch lighted with a demonish glow.

As the surroundings suggested the possibility of something

human in connection with the cavern, he determined to ~~ac-~~ cost the old man.

"I say, stranger; air you the boss of this buryin' place? If you air, I would be glad to know how long we have been dead, if we air dead. If we ain't dead, how did we git here?"

"Are your companions awake?" asked the old man, suddenly turning and facing the speaker.

"The boys? They seem to be sorter stirrin'. Git up, fellers! The day of judgment has arriv', or thar's been an airthquake."

Proctor shook his four friends vigorously, accompanying his action with a running stream of talk. All were finally aroused, and sat up, half stupefied.

"That will do, Proctor," said Hugh Rallston, rather angrily. "If you have carried this joke as far as you want to, I hope you will tell us what it means."

"You needn't git riled at me, Hugh. 'Tain't none of my doin'. If anybody knows any thin' about it, the old man is the one to talk to."

Hugh and the others stared at the old man, who crawled out at the entrance of the cavern, and beckoned to them to follow him.

"Come out into the air," he said. "You will feel better here, and will be able to understand what I have to tell you."

They obeyed, and crawled out after him; but their surprise was not diminished by the sight that met their eyes when they got outside of the cavern.

Right before them yawned a dark cavity, from which smoke was still rising. All around were scattered pieces of smoke-blackened rock, mingled with the remains of dead Indians, and the faint groans of two badly-wounded men, who had vainly endeavored to crawl away, could be heard in the distance.

"This is too much fur me, strangers," remarked Joe Proctor. "If it ain't the day of judgment or an airthquake, I must give it up."

The old man pointed down the slope, at the shady hollow below.

"Do you remember that place?" he asked

It was some minutes before their still stupefied senses could be brought to bear upon the question; but they finally comprehended it, and remembered the spot.

"That's the place whar we camped at noon," said Proctor. "Now it's about two hours to sundown. Was it to-day, or yesterday, or a month ago? Darn my pictur', if I can make head or tail of it yet!"

"It was to-day," replied the old man. "You had eaten your dinner, and you laid down to sleep."

"That's a fact; but thar was one more of us—Sam Seavey—what's become of *him*?"

"He laid down with the rest of you; but, as soon as you were sound asleep, he arose, looked at you, and hurried away into the forest, going toward the north."

"I see it all now!" exclaimed Hugh Rallston. "Seavey was a traitor. You remember, boys, that we all noticed that the meat had a strange and bitter taste. He 'salted' it with some drug, so that he might put us to sleep and betray us to the Indians."

"Very likely," resumed the old man. And he at once proceeded to detail, in a brief, solemn way, all that had happened.

"If it's a fa'r question," remarked Proctor, when the narrator had ended his story, "I would like to ax who you are, and whar you come from?"

The old man's eyes glistened, and a strange, wild expression overspread his features, as he replied to Proctor's question.

"I am Abdiel, the Destroyer! The Lord has given the heathen into my hands, and they shall be utterly destroyed. I came from the depths of the dark water, and I am a flaming sword on the face of the earth."

"If this is a specimen of your work in the destroyin' line, I judge that you are a good hand at the business. I don't want to be too inquisitive, friend Abdiel, but I would really like to know how you happened to have so much powder on hand?"

"It is a long story, and it has nearly passed from my memory. Be thankful for the life that the Lord has preserved to you, and ask not too many idle questions."

The old man, who was seated on a rock, bowed his face

upon his hands, and his manner intimated that he was unwilling to continue the conversation.

Joe Proctor looked at him, and pointed at his forehead significantly. Then he asked :

"What shall we do now?" 'Tain't wuth while to go arter those ho-ses. I would like to hunt for Seavey and the rest of the red-skins, but don't feel much like undertakin' the to's jest now."

The others were of the opinion that they did not feel like undertaking that or any other job, and agreed that it would be best to remain where they were, as the cavern was probably a safer resting place than any other they would be able to find in that vicinity, and arrangements were accordingly made for passing the night.

Joe Proctor went out to reconnoiter, and succeeded in shooting a young buck, which he brought to the cavern. It was dressed, and supper was cooked, of which all partook quite heartily, including the now silent Abdiel. When they had smoked their pipes, and had talked over the events of the day, all laid down in the cavern to sleep, with the exception of one, who was to stand guard until relieved.

CHAPTER VII.

BAD NEWS IN THE WILDERNESS.

The sleepers in the cavern were not disturbed during the night. Ben Pirtle, who was on guard when day dawned, noticed a dark object moving stealthily among the trees below, and soon made it out to be the figure of a man.

Thinking it possible that one of his comrades might have taken a fancy to make an early scout, he looked in at the cavern; but all the four were there, with old Abdiel, sleeping soundly.

As it was important to know who and what the stranger was, Pirtle aroused Joe Proctor, who was the oldest and most experienced hunter in the party, and told him what he had seen.

Proctor went out and saw the stranger, who was still moving stealthily about the shaded hollow, examining the marks of a recent fire and the tracks that were plentiful near it, but at the same time keeping carefully in the cover of the trees, and looking warily about, as if expecting an enemy to appear at any moment.

The two men took a position where they could not be seen by him, and watched him while he continued his examination. As the light of coming day penetrated into the hollow, the traces that he was scrutinizing became more distinct, and his eyes fell on the trail that led up to the cavern.

He raised his head, and both the men above uttered a simultaneous cry of recognition as they caught a full view of his face.

"It is Sol Steele," said Proctor. "I allowed that it looked like the old chap. Wonder what has brought him here?"

He arose and hailed the old hunter, who at once responded to the summons and hastened up the slope.

By the time he reached the cavern, all its inmates had been aroused, and Sol Steele was joyfully greeted by the young men, who were eager to learn what had brought him into that country. His countenance showed that he was glad to meet his friends, but that there was a grief behind his joy that quite overshadowed it.

"It ain't no pleasant arrant that I've come on," he replied, "and I've brought sech news as you won't be glad to hear. The Injuns have been at the station, and we have had two fights, and Emma Rallston and Laura Wingate have been took and kerried away."

This announcement caused the greatest consternation among the group to whom it was made. Henry Ewing was the betrothed of Emma Rallston, the attachment of Hugh Rallston to Laura Wingate was well known, and all the young men had relatives as well as friends at the station.

As soon as the first shock of the announcement was over, they pressed Steele to give them the particulars of the intelligence he had brought, and he proceeded to relate all the occurrences since they had left the station, concluding with the pursuit of the savages and its disastrous repulse.

"The Injuns didn't seem to be in any hurry to git to the

river," he said. "They moved to'able slow arter they left us, jest as if they thought we mought be fools enough to foller 'em ag'in. But our folks had had enough of that sort o' work, I reckon. It was easy fur me to git ahead of the Shawnees, and to cross the river afore they reached it. I then allowed that I had better take up the trail of the hoss-stealin' party, as I knowed that you would be on it, and that I would be likely to overhaul you, or to meet you comin' back. As this trail that you have been follerin' is the reg'lar war-path, to and from thar towns, it is likely that the Injuns will pass this way, and I thought it best to give you warnin'."

"Arthur Dutith!" muttered Hugh Rallston, whose anger nearly choked his utterance. "That half-blood Tory scoundrel! I flogged him in Virginia, and he vowed that he would be revenged upon all of us. But I never thought that he would find us, down there in Kentucky."

"He has laid his plans mighty keerful, I'm thinkin'. That hoss-stealin' job, as it now looks to me, was part of the business. The Injuns wanted to git some of our folks out of the way, so that they mought have a better chance at the station. Did you see any thin' of the hosses or of the thieves who took them?"

"Nothing at all, unless they were here yesterday, and we can't say that we saw them then. In fact, we all came within an ace of losing our scalps."

"How was that?"

Hugh related the particulars of Seavey's treachery, as he had been informed of them by Abdiel.

"That's off the same piece with the rest of the business," said Steele. "It's plain enough, now, that that feller Seavey was a spy, sent to the station by Dutith. It is jest in sech sneakin', onderminin' ways that the cussed half-breeds work. They have all the wust p'int of the Injun and the white man, with none of the good that's in either of 'em. I noticed how anxious Seavey was to git a chance to go with you arter the hoss-stealers; but I couldn't see that thar was any harm in it then. It must have been Captain Dutith who put him up to the hull job, and who gave him suthin' to 'doctor' your meat with. I make no doubt that the Injuns who came here arter you war those same hoss-stealin' ones, and that Seavey knowed

Jest whar to find 'em. They wouldn't have took your scalp, Hugh, but would have saved you fur the wust kind of a death, and Dutith would have had a hand in it when it came to killin'. I'd be willin' to bet even my rifle, that the business was fixed up in Detroit long ago, to be kerried out jest as 'twas kerried out, and I can tell you, my boy, that we've got to do some powerful chuss work, to beat the game of sech a scamp as that Captain Dutith."

"What can we do, Sol? Have you formed any plan?"

"Not a bit of it. I calkulated that I had best git ahead of 'em, and let you know what had happened, if I could find you. As Dutith has had it all so cleverly arranged so far, it is likely that he has fixed matters up so as to take the gals right on to Detroit."

"As the Shawnees outnumber us so largely, we can't hope to fight them, especially here in their own country. What we can do, if we can do any thing, must be the work of chance or stratagem."

"Exactly so. I don't see my way an inch ahead. Jest now we had better be thinkin' of our own safety. The Shawnees, accordin' to my notion, will be comin' up this trail. They will find your campin'-place, with all that sign around it, and will want to know what it means. Naterally they will look about and study the sign. They will find the trail that leads up here, jest as I found it, and will be sure to come to this cavern."

"You are right. If they should find us here, it would be difficult for us to escape, and it would be our wisest course, no doubt, to escape while we are able to do so. And yet, I hate to run away. What say you, boys?"

All agreed that they would be uselessly incurring danger by remaining where they were, though all were anxious to keep near the trail of the savages, in order to avail themselves of any possibilities that "chance or stratagem" might throw in their way.

"As that point is settled," said Hugh, "we had better steal away from here, and find a hiding-place a few miles to the north."

"No!"

It was Abdiel who spoke. He had been seated near the

group, absorbed in his own thoughts, and seeming not to listen to what was said ; but he now started up, and in his face was that strange and wild expression that it sometimes wore.

"You shall not go!" he exclaimed. "Am I not Abdiel, the Destroyer? Has not the Lord given the heathen into my hand, and shall they not be destroyed utterly? Have no fear of the man Dutith, or of the hordes of painted Amalekites! No your tents, oh Israel, and you shall see the vengeance of the Lord upon the wicked."

"I'm afeard that the old man is a leetle queer," said Sol Steele, as he shook his head, gravely.

"But he saved our lives," suggested Hugh, "and he nearly destroyed one party of Shawnees. If he can give any good reason for advising us to remain, I am inclined to trust him. Please explain yourself, friend Abdiel, and tell us why we should not go."

The old man's demeanor had suddenly changed, and his reply was calm and to the point.

"I have not yet shown you all the secrets of my cavern. Come with me, and let your eyes answer your question."

He crawled into the cavern, followed by Steele and Rallston, and lighted a torch. Giving the torch to Rallston to hold, he went to the rear of the cavern, which was apparently composed of as solid rock as the other sides. He loosened some stones, however, which he suffered to fall upon the floor of the cavern, disclosing another opening. A larger piece of stone was then removed, which widened the opening so that he easily passed through it, with the torch in his hand, followed by his two companions.

The old man held up the torch, showing them a larger chamber in the rock than that which they had just left. It was high enough for them to stand erect in it, and was destitute of furniture of any kind, being left exactly as nature had formed it, with the exception of the entrance, into which the stones had been fitted, so that the wall could be built up from either side. This was explained by Abdiel to Steele and Rallston ; but they still looked at him inquiringly, as if unable to comprehend his purpose in showing them this retreat.

"When the Shawnees come, you will retire into this place,"

he said, answering their glances. "They will find the trail, and will come up here. They will enter the cavern, and then—"

"And then what?" asked Hugh.

"I can not tell you; but you shall see. You will be safe."

"Too safe, I am afraid. We will be cooped up here, like rats in a hole. We can not live here, with nothing to eat or to drink, and it will be impossible to get out, unless the Indians go away."

The old man pointed to the back of the cavern, where a streak of light, which his companions had not previously noticed, was filtered through the rock.

"That will do," said Sol Steele. "I don't know what your plans may be, my friend; but that streak of light satisfies me. We had better stay here, Hugh. If the Shawnees come along afore night, they will be apt to camp down thar in the holler, until mornin', anyhow, and we may git a chance to do suthin', though I can't guess what it may be."

Hugh was glad of even a shadow of a chance to do something for the captive girls, and joyfully agreed to Steele's proposition. He went out and explained the position of affairs to the others, who were quite willing to remain where they were.

As Steele was of the opinion that it would yet be several hours before the Shawnees would make their appearance in that vicinity, the scouts had no hesitation about making a fire and cooking enough provisions to last them two or three days. This done, the fire was carefully extinguished, and the ashes were scattered so that they might cool quickly.

All then took up their quarters in the cavern, with the exception of Steele, who concealed himself where he could not be seen from below, and watched for the arrival of the Shawnees.

CHAPTER VIII.

A GUNPOWDER PLOT.

SOL STEELE had calculated with considerable accuracy the probable time of the arrival of the Shawnees. It lacked about three hours of sunset when they came in sight, straggling alone singly, and by twos and threes, exhibiting none of the caution that they would have used if they had not believed themselves to be out of reach of any possible danger.

Notwithstanding their losses at the station and at the fight in the forest, they numbered, as the scout calculated, about eighty warriors. They brought with them several wounded men, some of whom were carried on litters, and others were mounted on horses that had been taken from McGary's men. They seemed to be sad and despondent on their return, rather than joyful and triumphant. Although they had inflicted a great deal of damage upon the hated white men, they had themselves suffered quite severely. Many of their best warriors had been lost, and they knew that a season of lamentation awaited them when they should reach their towns.

In about the middle of the straggling line rode Emma Ralston and Laura Wingate, mounted on captured horses. Although so much care and attention had been shown them, they looked pale and weary and disconsolate. Near them, attired in the gay uniform of a British officer, rode Arthur Dutith, who appeared to be endeavoring to make himself agreeable to them, and to be meeting with very poor success in his endeavors.

A dark frown gathered on Sol Steele's face as he looked at Dutith, and he communicated to those in the cavern the particulars which he had thus far observed. Then he looked at the enemy again.

The Indians had halted, as he expected they would, on reaching the hollow, and they were not sparing of their exclamations and gestures of surprise, when they observed the

remains of a fire and the many tracks that were visible near it.

One who appeared to be a chief held a brief conference with Datith, and it seemed to be settled that they were to remain in the hollow for the present, as some of the Shawnees busied themselves with preparations for encamping, while others carefully examined the traces of previous occupation. The girls were assisted to dismount, the horses were tethered to trees, and couches of leaves and blankets were prepared for the wounded.

Hugh Rallston and Henry Ewing were anxious to get out of the cavern, to obtain a view of their captive *inamoratus*; but the old scout, fearing that the sight might prompt them to do something rash, would not suffer them even to show their faces outside of the opening.

Soon there was a commotion among the savages in the hollow. It was evident that a party was approaching from the north, and it was also soon evident that it was a friendly party.

It proved to be composed of Sam Seavey, Night-Hawk, and two more Shawnees who had been unhurt by the explosion of Abdiel's mine. Badly frightened as they had been, it was long before they ventured back to the scene of their disaster, and then they were overjoyed at finding the hollow in the possession of their friends.

Datith hastened forward to meet Seavey, and the Indians clustered around Night-Hawk, listening eagerly to his account of the mysterious destruction of his band.

That account was accompanied by many gesticulations, the Shawnee pointing energetically in the direction of the cavern, and Seavey chiming in to corroborate his statements.

Then there was a conference, at which it seemed to be decided that there must be an investigation of the mysterious transaction, and a number of warriors were told off by the chief. Datith appeared to be declaring his intention of joining them, and Seavey to be dissuading him from such a purpose.

As soon as the Shawnees, fifteen in number, started to ascend the slope, Sol Steele hastened into the cavern, and joined his friends in the inner chamber. Rallston and Ewing

were anxious to make a stand at the first opening, declaring that they could give the advancing party at least one volley, and thus decrease the number of their opponents; but old Abdiel was earnestly opposed to this course. He was of the opinion that it would serve their purposes much better for the savages to remain in ignorance of their whereabouts, and in this opinion he was upheld by Sol Steele.

The old man built up the entrance to the inner chamber from the inside, leaving the wall as it had been when he showed it to Steele and Rallston, and enjoined perfect silence upon all.

They sat in silence and in darkness, unable to see or to be seen. Only Abdiel and Sol Steele, who were close to the walled-up entrance, would be able to hear the Indians if they should enter the outer chamber, and perhaps to catch a glimpse of them through a crevice in the rock.

The Shawnees made their way up the slope slowly and with great caution. Night-Hawk, who was one of the party, kept carefully in the rear, and those in the advance, infected by his timidity, were in no hurry to reach the point of supposed danger.

As they approached the cliff, and saw the mangled remains of their friends scattered about among the rocks, their fear was partly overcome by anger, and their faces were dark with scowls as they muttered threats of vengeance.

At last they were in front of the entrance to the cavern, standing around the spot where the explosion had taken place. They looked with unconcealed horror at the smoke-blackened and blood-stained rocks, and there could be no doubt that they felt uncomfortable, that they wished themselves anywhere but there.

They held their weapons in readiness to repel an attack at any moment; but there was no attack to repel. They stepped gingerly about, fearing an explosion; but no hidden fires rushed up to destroy them. Gradually they grew bolder, and peered in at the opening, and their confidence rose when they discovered that no enemy was in sight. Night-Hawk also gained courage, and went to them, telling them that the white people must surely be in the cavern. If they had left that place, he said, they would probably have traveled on the war-

trace. If they had gone north, he and his companions would have seen them; if they had gone south, the larger party would have met them. Besides, he had noticed the trail carefully, and there were no marks to show that they had descended the slope, and they could not have climbed the cliff.

His conjectures were any thing but consoling to the other Shawnees, who were by no means anxious to discover the white men. Again they peered in at the cavern, but nothing was to be seen or heard there.

One thrust in his head, and declared that the place was empty. Pushed on by those behind, he crawled in, and the rest gradually followed. They had brought a bit of burning wood, with which they kindled a little blaze on the floor of the cavern. By this light they examined the apartment, with many guttural exclamations and significant gestures as they noticed the traces of its recent occupation.

The white men in the interior chamber maintained a silence as profound as that of the grave. None of them stirred, and hardly their breathing could be heard. Sol Steele, with his ear at the rocky wall, and Abdiel, with his eye at the crevice, could hear and see something of what was going on outside. Both knew when the Indians entered, and Abdiel, when the fire was lighted in the other apartment, could see them quite plainly.

"Are they all in?" asked Steele.

The old man did not reply, but pulled a stout cord, made of braided buck-skin, that hung near him.

Sol Steele fancied that he heard a click, like that of the lock of a gun or a pistol. If he did, the slight sound was lost in the terrific explosion that followed—an explosion that seemed to jar the whole ledge, that shook the apartment in which the white men were concealed, and sent fragments of stone rattling down about them.

After the explosion came the noise of falling masses of rock, mingled with shrieks and groans, that continued a few minutes, and then all was still.

The white men had started up in surprise and consternation, and crowded around Abdiel for an explanation of what had happened.

"Have you blowed up the cavern in thar?" asked Sol Steele.

"No; I have blown it down," replied the old man. "I put my charge of powder deep in the rock, just over the entrance. I arranged it some time ago, expecting that I would be able to catch the heathen in a trap. If it has worked as I intended it to work, the rock over the entrance has fallen in, and the cavern is closed."

It was to be noticed that Abdiel spoke in calm and even tones, without a touch of the madness that was so evident at times. Not even the excitement of the explosion had caused him to break forth as he had done on the previous occasion. This fact, coupled with the recent result of his plans, evincing intelligent and deliberate action, gave the young men greater confidence in him, and they were ready to look up to him as a leader.

"It seems to have extinguished the Shawnees," said Hugh Rallston. "We know that some of them were badly hurt. Others must have been killed, and some may yet be living."

"They can't live long," suggested Ewing, "and it would have been better for them to be killed outright than to die such a lingering death."

"Their friends may dig them out."

"It will be a hard job of digging. I am glad that none of us are in there. As it is, I feel as if I had been buried alive, and am anxious to get out of this stifling hole. It seems to me, friend Abdiel, that you may as well turn us loose now."

The old man led the way toward the back part of the cavern, to the streak of light that has been mentioned. He rolled away a large stone near the roof of the apartment, showing an opening through which light and air came freely. He crawled out at this opening, gladly followed by the others, and replaced the stone.

The lodge, as the young men perceived when they had passed out of the cavern, was of a peculiar formation. On the side next to the Shawnees, as has been noticed, was a cliff some fifty feet in height. From the edge of this cliff it sloped sharply off toward the east, until it terminated in a small and rapid brook, the bed of which was considerably lower than the hollow where the Indians were camped. The cavern ex-

tended through the ledge, and Abdiel and his companions, when they crawled out at the eastern opening, found themselves at about the middle of the rocky but tree-covered slope.

As they were thus completely concealed from the view of their enemies, they stopped there and held a conference, the result of which was that they determined to go further up the stream, and to select a hiding-place near the trail of the Shawnees. They could not reach the Indians from where they were, nor could they be reached by them; but they would be able, by following the war-trace down from the north, to observe the movements of the Shawnees, and to take advantage of any opportunities that might present themselves.

It was near sunset when they arrived at this conclusion; and they proceeded to carry it into effect at once. Joe Proctor and Hugh Rallston announced their intention of remaining at the ledge a while longer to watch the proceedings of the Shawnees. They were cautioned to be very careful not to expose themselves to the view of the Indians, and the others took up their line of march toward the north.

CHAPTER IX.

IN A DEAD MAN'S DRESS.

OLD ABDIEL was tacitly chosen as guide of the party that went north, because of his acquaintance with the vicinity, and because the signal services that he had rendered had given him a high place in the estimation of the others.

Following his lead, they stepped into the water, and walked up the bed of the stream, which flowed from the north-east, being one of the tributaries of the Miami. Willing to leave no trail behind them, they proceeded in this way nearly a mile, and then turned off to the left, into a little glen that led in the direction of the Shawnee war-trace.

They determined to pass the night near the stream, and sat down under the trees to eat their supper; but they built no

fire, lest it might attract the attention of some wandering Shawnee scout.

When they had finished their repast, Sol Steele announced his intention of scouting through the forest and in the direction of the Shawnee encampment, in the hope of making some discoveries that might prove profitable. Old Abdiel, who seemed to have taken a great fancy to the hunter, insisted on accompanying him, and they set off together, leaving Ewing and Pirtle and McGinnis to keep company with each other.

They had not been absent half an hour when they returned, and were asked what had brought them back so soon.

"We have found something," replied Steele. "We went north a leetle way, as our old friend said that the Shawnee trail turned to the right not fur from here, and we wanted to see a sort of pass that it led through. When we got to the pass, we noticed that thar was a fire burnin' in it, and we picked our way purty keerful, ontill we caught sight of a small camp, and diskivered that the campers war four Injuns and a British ossifer."

"Was it Dutith?" eagerly inquired Henry Ewing.

"No; it warn't Dutith, but an ossifer who will suit our wants jest now, I'm thinkin', rayther better than Dutith. He was sleepin' on a blanket, nigh the fire, with three Injuns sleepin' cluss to him, and t'other propped against a tree, tryin' to keep awake and stand guard."

"What has that to do with us? If they don't belong to the party that carried off our friends, we had better leave them alone, as we have enough to attend to without interfering with them."

"We five can creep up on 'em, Harry, and can lay 'em out without hurtin' a ha'r of our heads."

"Kill them in cold blood? That would look too much like murder."

"They are inimies, my boy, and you know that they would treat us to the same, or much wuss, if they could git the chance."

"But one of them is a white man."

"He is in durned bad company, and must take the consequences."

"That is the very man we want!" exclaimed Abdiel

"Young man, if you wish to rescue your friends from the Shawnees, this is an opportunity that will not occur again, and it may prove their salvation. Don't you see what may be done if we get that officer's uniform?"

Ewing did see, and he jumped up and seized his rifle as the idea flashed across his mind.

The others were ready enough to go, and the five men at once set out through the forest.

The moon had risen when they reached the pass, as Sol Steele called a narrow valley between two high and sloping hills, through which the Shawnee trail led. About in the middle of the valley was a spring, from which a little brook ran in wet weather, but the brook was now almost dry. Near the spring were sleeping the British officer of whom Steele had spoken, and three Indians. The fourth Indian, as the scout had said, was standing guard and endeavoring to keep awake.

The five white men stole along the side of one of the sloping hills, in the cover of the trees, until they were directly opposite to the party below, and within fair rifle-shot of them.

"Thar's jest one apiece," whispered the scout.

"I will mark the officer," said Ewing. "I promise you that I will make him sure."

"And I will take the sentinel. Let each choose his man, and we will crawl to the bresh down yander, and you must fire when I whistle."

The five crawled a few yards further down the slope, and took their position behind some low bushes, through which they pointed their rifles. The sleepy sentinel nodded at his post, and neither saw nor heard any thing, until a low whistle from Sol Steele broke the profound stillness of the night.

The five rifles cracked together, and the scene in the quiet valley changed suddenly. The sentinel uttered a startling cry, threw up his hands, and fell to the ground. The British officer moved convulsively, but did not rise. One of the Indians near him leaped up into the air, and dropped back a corpse. Another was badly wounded, and one only was unhurt. He sprung to his feet; but his deadly foes were upon him before he could collect his startled senses. A pistol bul

let from Ewing disabled him, and he was unceremoniously knocked in the head by John McGinnis, while Pirtle finished the other wounded wretch.

It was bloody, brutal, murderous work; but it was the kind of work that was rendered necessary by the savage nature of Indian warfare. Five souls had been suddenly sent, without a moment's warning, into the presence of their Creator; but those who hurried them out of the world knew that their adversaries would have shown them no mercy if they had caught them at a disadvantage. Besides, one of the white men had the death of a brother to avenge, and all had lost near and dear friends by pitiless Indian massacre.

There was no room for any thing like sentiment in the hearts of the victors as they looked at the bodies of their vanquished. They had made an end of four enemies of the white race, and of one enemy of their country. They had done what they believed to be their duty, and their consciences did not reproach them.

Henry Ewing felt a pang of pity as he viewed the corpse of the officer whom he had shot; but this feeling was quickly effaced by the thought that he had gained something for himself and his friends.

The officer was a middle-aged man, about the size and build of Ewing, who hastened to strip off his outer garments, assisted by Abdiel and Sol Steele.

"What are you going to do now?" asked the old man.

"I have guessed what you meant," replied Ewing. "I shall borrow this man's clothes, and shall present myself at the camp of the Shawnees in the character of a British officer. As you suggested, a great deal may be done with this uniform."

"But the Shawnees may be acquainted with this officer, and may discover that you are imposing upon them."

"There is a risk to be run, no doubt; but we must expect to take some risks, if we are to gain any thing."

"You are young, and have the world before you. I am old, and my life is useless to any one. Let me take the risk in your place."

"Harry's the right man to go," said Sol Steele. "He's just the right size, and he has the gift of gab. Perhaps, if

you look in them pockets, you may find some papers that will help him out."

The pockets were searched, and letters and documents were found in them, indicating that the officer was named Captain Cumberland, that he had recently come from Canada, and that he had passed through Detroit and Fort Miami, on his way to incite the Indians to fresh outrages upon the settlers in Kentucky.

Henry Ewing donned the uniform and assumed the character of Captain Cumberland, and requested Abdiel to direct him to the Shawnee encampment. He was told that he had only to follow the trail he was on, which was a broad and easy one, being a regular war-trace, and that he could hardly miss it by moonlight.

A horse was found tethered near by, with the saddle and holsters and equipments that had belonged to the officer, and Ewing mounted and rode down the trail, followed by the God speed of his companions.

It was the fact of his being a white man, no doubt, that induced Abdiel and his friends to give burial to the body of Captain Cumberland. They left the Indians where they had fallen, and went away from the trail, a short distance up the slope, where they rested themselves under the trees. They had been so excited by recent occurrences, that they were not inclined to sleep, and preferred to talk over the events of the day and their prospects for the future.

CHAPTER X.

A REVELATION.

SOL STEELE had noticed that old Abdiel showed no more symptoms of the madness that had broken out on him occasionally, and was curious to know the reason of the change in his demeanor. He hinted at the subject, quite delicately, to the old man, who appeared to be not unwilling to converse frankly concerning it.

"I believe that I have been crazy at times," he said; "in fact, I know that I have been; but a great change has come over me during the past day. It must be that your company and conversation have changed me. It is so long since I have seen and spoken with any of my own race, that I have become more like a wild animal than a man."

"I would like to know," remarked Steele, "if it ain't bein' too inquisitive, how long you have been in the woods, and how you got thar?"

"I will tell you. One of you asked me how I happened to have on hand the powder with which my mines were charged. I said that it was a long story, and that it had nearly passed from my memory; but it has come back to me now, and you shall hear it.

"Nearly a year ago I was descending the Ohio in a keel-boat, intending to go up the Licking and seek a location for a settlement. With me were my son and daughter, and four men whom I had hired for the trip. We were a little distance below the mouth of the Scioto, when the boat was hailed from the right bank by a solitary white man. My son, who was on deck with the four other men, steered the boat in toward the shore, and was told by the white man that he had escaped from the Indians, and was in distress. We had heard of decoys; but the claims of humanity overcame our caution.

"The hands manned the sweeps, and rowed in to take him off; but, when the boat had nearly reached the bank, a number of Indians jumped up and fired a volley into it. By that volley every man in sight, including my son, was killed or mortally wounded. I escaped by being inside of the inclosure with my daughter.

"I at once went out, and succeeded in turning the boat's head from the shore. There happened to be a current setting off at that point, which carried it out into the middle of the river.

"The boat was hardly out of reach of rifle-shots from the north bank, when I perceived that the Indians were putting out from below, in a flat-boat which they had captured, and which they used for the purpose of making other captures. I knew that they would not endeavor to force their boat against

the current of the river ; but would wait to intercept me below. The only chance to save the lives of my daughter and myself lay in reaching the south bank and trusting to the shelter of the woods.

" By great exertions I succeeded in effecting a landing, made the boat fast, and hastened ashore with my daughter. When I had taken her a considerable distance into the forest, I bethought myself of my rifle. I had not been able to carry it and take care of her, and I knew that it was absolutely necessary for the support of our lives. As it would be some time before the Indians would be able to get to shore and reach the point where I had landed, and as it was, by that time, so dark that they would be unable to trace our trail, I determined to return for the rifle.

" No enemies were in sight when I reached the boat, and I thought it best, as I could do the work in a few minutes, to scuttle it, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Indians. This was soon done, and I secured my rifle and a quantity of ammunition. As I came out on deck, I was startled by Indian yells, and at least a dozen savages came rushing down the bank.

" The boat was sinking rapidly. My daughter was far in the forest, and it was impossible to reach her. I was crazed, and knew not what I did. I had lost every thing but my life, and it was only a blind impulse that prompted me to save that. I jumped into the water, and found myself, the next morning, lying under the trees on the north shore. I must have swum across the river and climbed the bank ; but I knew nothing of what had happened.

" I do not know how or where I lived for a while. Providence in its mercy, had destroyed my memory. In the course of time, as the water fell I saw the boat on the other side, left nearly dry. I had found an Indian canoe, in which I crossed the river. I took from the boat, among other articles, a rifle and several waterproof cans of powder, which I brought away and concealed on this side. In the course of my wanderings I discovered the cavern in which you met me, and removed my property thither.

" I have since lived in the forest, supporting myself by my rifle, and caring for no other life until you came. I was once

a prisoner among the Indians; but they did not harm me—perhaps for the reason that they considered me insane. If they had known how many of their warriors I had slain, I think they would not have suffered me to live.

“As I said, a great change has come over me. It may have been caused by the companionship of white men, or it may be that my mind has been gradually restored to its balance. I know that I now have my reason, and my memory has come back to me. There is but one thing I have forgotten, and that is my own name. When I was among the Indians I learned the name of the white decoy at the river. It was Arthur Dutith. I can never forget that; but I am utterly unable to recall my own name.”

“Was it Gideon Wingate?” asked Sol Steele, who had been listening intently and gazing earnestly at the old man.

“Yes! That is my name! Who are you, and how did you learn it?”

“If you are Gideon Wingate, your darter is alive.”

“Alive! It is not possible. For God’s sake, do not trifle with me!”

“I ain’t much of a triffin’ character. Jest listen a minute. Suthin’ less’n a year ago, I had escaped from Detroit, and was guidin’ Colonel Rallston and his folks across from Limestone to the place on the Lickin’ whar they meant to settle. We had camped for the night, and I was takin’ a leetle scout around, when I found a white gal thar in the woods. She told about the same story that you have told, exceptin’ she allowed that her father was sartinly killed, as she had heard the Injuns yellin’ and firin’ arter he went back to the river. I took her into camp and went to the river the next mornin’ but the boat was sunk, and thar was no sign of her father and we went on. She called herself Laura Wingate, and said that her father’s name was Gideon Wingate.”

The old man was trembling to such a degree, and such a wild fire blazed in his eyes, that his friends began to fear a relapse into insanity.

“My daughter!” he exclaimed. “You said that she is living. Where is she?”

“She has been livin’ with Colorel Rallston’s folks, who think the world of her. Bu’ she is the one who was picked

up by the Injuns, with Emma Rallston, and she is now in the Shawnee camp."

"And the name of the white man who led the Indians is Arthur Dutith?"

"Arthur Dutith. That's another score fur him to settle, I reckon."

CHAPTER XI.

THE CAPTIVES.

EMMA RALLSTON and Laura Wingate had left the station with the knowledge and approval of Colonel Rallston. When the Indians had stolen the horses belonging to the settlement, it was supposed that they had gone away satisfied, and that there were no more in the vicinity. The two boys were sent with the young ladies as company, rather than as a protection.

They strayed more than a mile from the station, their purpose being to reach the edge of a "barren," where blackberries were abundant. They were busily engaged in filling their baskets, when the Indians silently approached them, and one of the boys was knocked down with a tomahawk before the presence of the assailants was discovered.

The other boy and the young ladies attempted to escape by flight, but were speedily captured, and Emma and Laura were compelled to witness the slaughter and scalping of their remaining companion. The girls were then taken into the forest, where their captors joined a large body of Indians, who were on their way to the station.

Among the Indians, and apparently acting as their leader, was a man in the uniform of a British officer, whom Emma Rallston had no difficulty in recognizing as Arthur Dutith, the half-breed Tory, who had pressed his attentions on her while she was residing in Virginia, and who had been flogged by her brother Hugh, and finally driven out of the country.

This individual approached her with a malicious smile on

his unprepossessing countenance, and congratulated her upon being in his presence and under his protection.

Emma, who was a high-spirited and fearless young woman of twenty, answered him only with a glance of contempt.

"I told your people long ago," he said, "that I would be revenged upon them, and that you should yet be mine. You perceive that I have remembered my promise, and that I have kept my word. I have waited long for this opportunity, and have watched for it carefully, and have so laid my plans that it will be impossible for you to escape from me. You must become my wife, or worse, and the sooner you make up your mind to it, the better for your peace and happiness."

"I shall not allow you to disturb my peace of mind," proudly replied Emma. "I have no doubt that I shall escape from your hands, though you have captured me in such a mean and cowardly manner. My father and brother will soon miss us, and they will raise a force that will scatter your Indians and make an end of them."

Dutith laughed—a hard, dissonant, mocking laugh.

"Soon there will be none of your people left alive to interfere with me," he said. "Listen, and I will tell you how well my plans have been arranged, and then you will know that there is nothing left for you to do but to submit to my will. It was easy for me to learn that you had removed to this country, and where you were located. I sent a man whom I could trust to live with your people, and to learn their habits and strength. His name was Seavey, and you doubtless knew him well. Then I sent a party of Indians to steal your horses, Seavey arranging matters so that the party could have no difficulty in doing their errand. My object in this was to weaken the force at the station, by drawing off men in pursuit of the horses; but I had another object. Can you guess what it was?"

"I have no disposition to try."

"I knew that Hugh Rallston would be one of the party, and that my man Seavey would be another. They went after the horses, and I saw them and counted them as they went. I might have killed them before they crossed the river; but they went with my permission and for my purposes. Seavey will lead them into a trap, if he has not al-

ready done so, and they will be captured by the Shawnees, and will be held until I come and decide what shall be done with them. Don't you think that I will be revenged on Hugh Rallston for his treatment to me?"

If Emma had been able to kill the half-breed, she would have struck him dead where he stood, reckless of all consequences. She could not trust her lips to answer him, and said nothing.

"There is another in that party," he continued, "in whom I believe you feel some interest. What do you suppose his fate will be? I do not know, myself, but am of the opinion that it will depend somewhat upon you. As you can't rely on your brother, will you fall back on your father and the people at the station? Within an hour every one of them will be dead or in our hands. What chance do you think they have? Five of them have gone after the horses. Eight or ten are at work out in the corn-patches. Those eight or ten will be cut off, and will surely be killed or captured. Do you suppose that the few who will be left at the station can defend it against all these Indians? You perceive, my proud beauty, that you must be mine, and that my revenge on your family will be complete."

He laughed again—the same harsh, unpleasant, mocking laugh—and went to another part of the forest, leaving the girls in charge of the Indians who had captured them.

The proud and fearless spirit of Emma Rallston was nearly crushed. She could not doubt that all was as Dutith had told her. When she saw how carefully his plans had been laid, and how exactly they had been carried out thus far, she was forced to believe that there was no hope for her or her family and friends. The probable fate of her brother and Henry Ewing was too horrible to think of; death or captivity surely awaited her parents; while for herself nothing remained but a life of misery or death by her own hand.

Great as her terror was, she was obliged to conceal it for the sake of her friend, who was two years younger than herself, and whose nature was not so capable of endurance as her own.

Laura Wingate was so distressed by her own capture, by

the murder of the two boys, by the peril of Hugh Rallston, and by the danger that threatened her friends, that she was completely broken down. She remembered too well the loss of her brother and her father, at the hands of the Indians, and these additional horrors, as Dutith painted them, nearly drove her crazy. Emma knew that her friend's grief and weakness would only prompt the Indians to renewed persecutions, and she used her utmost exertions to encourage Laura and restore her composure.

Soon the girls knew that the attack upon the station had been commenced, and they awaited the result in trembling anxiety. From their position they could see nothing of what was going on; but the firing and yelling told them that bloody work was in progress. Believing that the plans of Dutith would be carried out, they could only pray for their friends.

The dark cloud that overshadowed them turned up an edge of its silver lining when they discovered that the attack had not succeeded. They did not know who had been killed or wounded, or what damage had been done by the Indians; but they soon learned that the assailants had been defeated, that the station had resisted their efforts to destroy it.

Dutith came to them, and his face was black with rage.

"I have lost one point in the game," he said, with an oath. "Has Seavey lied to me, or has help come in at the station? You can tell me, if you will, whether they have received any reinforcements within the past ten days."

"You will get no information from me," replied Emma.

"Very well. It was only curiosity that caused me to ask you, as it is of no consequence, now, whether there are many or few at the station. If they have not received reinforcements, each man must have done the work of two, and I am willing to admit that I never saw such fighting. They have baffled me this time; but I will come again, and will then make sure of them. These cowardly Shawnees will do nothing more now. They have determined to return to their own country, and will start early in the morning. As it will be a long journey for you, you had better content yourselves and go to sleep."

Emma Rallston, forgetting her own peril and sorrows, resolved to make an effort in behalf of her friend.

"Why should you take this girl?" she asked. "She is not related to my family, and has never done you any harm. She is nearly heart-broken, and is too weak to endure the fatigue and hardship of such a journey. You have nothing to do with her; let her return to the station."

Dutith smiled maliciously.

"The Indians wouldn't allow it," he said, "if I should be willing to let her go, and I am not willing. I can find plenty of use for such as she, and you must think that I have learned very little about you, not to know that she is betrothed to your brother. I mean to be fully revenged upon Hugh Rallston, and there is more than one way to hurt him. The failure of the attack on the station has only strengthened my determination to make the most of the rest of my opportunities. You had better content yourselves and try to sleep."

Emma endeavored to comfort her friend with the hope that they might yet escape or be rescued. One of Dutith's plans, which he had counted on as sure to succeed, had failed, and his other projects might also fall through. Hugh Rallston and his companions were expert and careful woodsmen, who could not be easily led into a trap. The presence of such a body of Indians would arouse the settlers, who would speedily rally and pursue them. Thus she strove to raise the spirits of Laura, but with poor success, as her own were very low, and she could really find no ground for hope.

Before daylight the Indians started down the river, and the girls could only sob and moan as they were helplessly carried away from their home and friends.

When the sounds of firing in the rear of the party proclaimed that there was an enemy at hand, Emma again sought to cheer her friend, and reminded Laura of her prediction that the settlers would rise. She was sure that the men at the station would not have attempted to pursue the Indians alone, and rightly judged that they had received reinforcements from other settlements.

The girls soon learned that their friends had been ambushed and defeated, and were finally informed of the result of the conflict by Dutith, who boastfully told them that the

white people had been driven back to the station with great loss.

"I'm sorry to inform you, Miss Rallston, that your father didn't happen to be among the killed," he said; "but I gave him a few cuts with my tongue that were probably as bad as bullets to him. We took a number of horses from these people, and that is a windfall for you and your friend, as you will be able to perform the rest of the journey on horseback.

The girls were mounted, and the Indians reached the river without any further molestation. They crossed in canoes, swimming the horses, and resumed their march toward the north.

Nothing of importance occurred until the afternoon of the first day after the crossing was made, when the Indians who were in the advance reported that they had come upon the "sign" of white men.

The advance came to a halt, and the word was passed down the straggling line.

"We will soon hear from Hugh Rallston and his party, and will probably have the pleasure of meeting them," said Dutith, who was riding with Emma and Laura when the news reached him. "They can't have got much further than this when Seavey led them into a trap, and it is probable that the Shawnees who captured them are near at hand."

CHAPTER XLI.

OPENING THE DEATH MINE.

CAPTAIN DUTITH rode forward until he reached the place where Hugh Rallston and his companions had lain down to sleep, under the influence of the drug that had been administered to them by Seavey.

He found the Indians examining the hollow, considerably puzzled by the appearance of the ground. The ashes of a fire indicated that there had been an encampment on the spot;

but there were so many tracks, both of red-men and whites, leading in so many different directions, that the Shawnee trailers were obliged to confess that they did not understand the "sign."

The difficulty was soon solved by the appearance of Seavey, with Night-Hawk and a few other Shawnees, who proceeded to explain what had happened, Night-Hawk addressing himself to the Indians, and the spy reporting to Captain Dutith.

The account of the latter was by no means satisfactory to his employer. He had used the powder, he said, as Captain Dutith had directed him to use it, and it had the effect of putting the whole party to sleep. When he had made sure that they were all asleep, he left them, and went to find the Indians, who, by previous arrangement, were to be near that spot. He went on to describe his return, the disappearance of the young men, the assault on the cavern, and the explosion by which the party was nearly destroyed. He did not know who or what the man was who had taken the sleepers to the cavern, but thought it probable that they were still there.

When the entire band had collected in the hollow, it was decided that the cavern should be explored, and that its inmates, if it had any, should be captured at all hazards. A picked party was sent up the slope for this purpose, and its progress was watched with the intensest interest.

When the Indians had entered the cavern it was supposed that they had found it empty, and that there was no more danger. The explosion that ensued was unexpected and terrifying.

The Indians in the hollow were so stupefied, that it was some moments before they could speak or move. They stood, silent and motionless, staring vacantly at the smoke and dust that arose from the cavern. None were worse frightened than Seavey and Night-Hawk. They had once seen the solid rock open under the feet of one party, and now they saw it open over the heads of another. These terrible manifestations were too much for their equanimity, and they hastened to put a safe distance between themselves and the scene of the two disasters.

When the smoke and dust had cleared away, the entrance

to the cavern was no longer visible, and in its place was a mass of smoke-blackened rock. The explosion had simply loosened a large portion of the cliff, which had dropped down into the opening, completely closing it.

Captain Dutith was in a fearful rage. The escape of Hugh Rallston and his companions, whose capture he had regarded as certain, had annoyed him greatly, and he believed that they must have had a hand in the subsequent developments. He knew that the explosion had been caused by some human agency, and it was reasonable to suppose that that agency could not be far distant from the scene of its operations. He was resolved to make every possible effort to discover the objects of his vengeance.

The Shawnees were no less indignant. It was not enough that they had lost the opportunity of exulting in the tortures of their escaped victims; but they must be defied and slaughtered in their own country. And yet, it was some time before their anger was sufficiently fierce to induce them to take action in the matter. The mysterious and terrible occurrences at the cavern had demoralized them, and they were loth to approach the spot where the explosions had taken place.

Dutith encouraged them to act, urging that the warriors who had entered the cavern might not have been killed. The rock had fallen down at the entrance; but they might be inclosed in the interior, alive, and unable to extricate themselves. Their enemies, also, must be somewhere in the vicinity, and should be found and punished; but it was the first duty of the Shawnees to endeavor to rescue their friends, by removing the *debris* of the explosion, and working their way into the cavern.

He ascended the slope and began to throw aside the broken rock. His example was followed by the Indians, although they found it difficult to overcome their repugnance to such labor, and undertook the task fearfully and unwillingly. The work was as difficult as the laborers were unwilling. Some of the masses of stone were so heavy that they could not be moved by as many as could take hold of them, and it was necessary to break them into smaller fragments.

As it was nearly dark when the job was commenced, the Indians were soon obliged to build a fire to give them light

to work by, and the indications were that it would take them the greater part of the night to dig their way into the cavern.

Emma Rallston and Laura Wingate viewed these proceedings with intense interest. They had been brought into the hollow by the Indians, and were guarded as usual, but were free to look about and to interchange opinions with each other.

Dutith had told them that they would soon hear from Hugh and his companions, and would probably see them; but they had neither seen them nor heard any thing about them. If they had been captured, Dutith would have been eager to make the fact known, and his silence on that subject was at least encouraging.

The girls could easily see that their captors were perplexed about something. There was a great deal of talking among them; but Emma and Laura could understand none of it, as it was in the Shawnee language.

The arrival of Seavey was a development which the captives at once understood. It was he who was to lead Hugh and his friends into a trap, and the Indians with him were probably those who were to spring the trap. But they brought no prisoners, and had nothing to offer but explanations, and it was reasonable for the girls to conclude that their friends had escaped. The frequent pointing toward a neighboring cliff, and the final ascent, by a number of Indians, of the slope that led to the cliff, induced them to believe that the untrapped party had escaped or sought concealment in that direction.

After the explosion, the girls were confident that Hugh and his companions were somewhere in the vicinity. They could not understand what had happened, but knew that the Indians had been foiled in some manner, and naturally supposed that the explosion which they had witnessed was the work of white men.

While they were seated on the side of the hollow, gazing at the cliff and at the Shawnees who had begun to remove the mass of rock, Laura suddenly uttered an exclamation, and grasped her friend's arm convulsively.

"What is the matter?" asked Emma.

"I have seen Hugh, or his ghost!"

"Where? Don't point; don't show any excitement; but whisper to me, and tell me what you mean."

Laura explained, as calmly as she could, that she had been looking at the cliff, and had seen a man's face at the edge. It had been suddenly withdrawn; but the light of the setting sun had shown it plainly, and she had recognized it as the face of Hugh Rallston.

"Don't look that way again, dear," entreated Emma. "You are too much excited to be discreet. The Indians are watching us closely, and they might see the face if it should be shown again."

Laura hid her eyes to avoid temptation. Emma, while apparently gazing at nothing but the working party of Indians, watched the edge of the cliff, and soon a face appeared, which she recognized by the last rays of sunlight.

"It wasn't Hugh," she whispered. "It was Joe Proctor."

"Then they are both here," answered Laura. "I am sure that I saw Hugh."

"Seavey did not succeed in leading them into his trap, or they escaped from it. That is certain. You now see, Laura, that two of Arthur Dutith's projects have failed, and we may hope that the others will fall through. Hugh and Proctor have seen us, and the others are with them, no doubt. They will try to help us—we know that—and they may be able, with the aid of Providence, to do something for us. But here comes Dutith, and he looks angry. Don't say or do any thing to give him a hint of what we have seen."

Dutith *was* angry, and he closely scrutinized the countenances of his prisoners, to judge whether they understood what had happened in the hollow and at the cavern; but Laura held down her head, and Emma met him with a calm, unshrinking gaze.

"You have disappointed us," said the latter. "You told us that we would soon hear of my brother and his friends, and that we would probably see them. Were you mistaken in your calculations, or do you not intend to allow us to see them?"

Dutith looked searchingly at the speaker. She was strangely calm and outspoken. Could it be that she had seen any

thing that he had failed to observe—any thing that had inspired her with new confidence or with the hope of deliverance? Whatever he may have expected, he learned nothing from his study of her features.

“My plans have not succeeded as well as I expected,” he replied, sullenly. “Hugh Rallston and his party have escaped, so far; but I will soon get hold of them. They can not be far from here, and it will be impossible for them to reach the river without being discovered by the Indians, who will scour the woods in search of them. You need not deceive yourself with the hope that any thing will—”

He was interrupted by a crash. A huge piece of rock had become detached from the edge of the cliff, and had gone thundering down, into the midst of the Shawnees who were at work at the entrance of the cavern. The crash was followed by yells and shrieks, and the greatest consternation prevailed among the Indians.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE UNEXPECTED GUEST.

CAPTAIN DUTITH, uttering a horrible oath, rushed to the spot where the rock had fallen, and discovered that the terrified Shawnees had run away from their work, without stopping to render any assistance to those who had been injured. It was with the utmost difficulty that he could induce a few warriors to go up to the cavern to look after their comrades.

It was a terrible blow. Three men had been killed by the rolling of the rock, and others were badly bruised and mangled.

No wonder the Shawnees were afraid of the place, and unwilling to go near it. Their superstitions were aroused, they believed that the cavern was fatal to their race, and they declared that they would not meddle with it in any manner.

Dutith represented to them that the warriors who had been shut in by the explosion might yet be living; that he was sure that some of them were alive, as he had heard their cries

and groans ; that the rock by which the entrance was choked up was nearly removed ; that the Shawnees were unworthy the name of men if they should not make another effort to rescue their friends from death by suffocation or starvation.

He implored them and threatened them, plied them with entreaties and stung them with taunts ; but it was not until he set the example, by going to the cavern and applying himself vigorously to the work they had abandoned, that they ascended the slope, one after another, and fearfully returned to their task.

When he had got them at work, he went down into the hollow, and had a consultation with the chief in command, the result of which was that twenty warriors left the camp, half of them going toward the north, and half toward the south.

Dutith then went toward the place where his captives were seated ; but, instead of going up to them openly, as he had done before, approached them stealthily from the rear, taking great pains to prevent them from seeing or hearing him.

The girls were whispering to each other concerning the last occurrence that had so shocked and frightened the Shawnees.

" I believe it was either Hugh or Joe Proctor who loosened the stone from the edge of the cliff," said Emma.

" Do you think they will try it again ?" asked Laura.

" I hope not. They can do very little for us in that way, if any thing, and they run a great risk."

" Hush ! I think I can see one of them at the edge of the cliff again."

" I believe I can see something moving there, though it is so dark that I can't distinguish what it is."

" *You are both right !*"

The girls started and screamed, so great was their surprise at hearing these words pronounced so close to them, and at seeing Captain Dutith rise up out of the ground as it seemed.

" Don't be frightened, young ladies," he said. " I have taken the liberty of listening to your talk, and am satisfied that you were both right. It was either Hugh Rallston or Joe Proctor who loosened that stone, and it was one of them who was at the edge of the cliff just now. My eyes are

better than your's, and I could distinguish a man's face, though I couldn't tell to whom it belonged. You need have no uneasiness about them, as they won't roll down any more rocks. I have sent some Indians to look for them, and we will soon have them, dead or alive."

A sudden thought flashed into Emma's mind. Her friends had been discovered, and it was her duty to warn them of their danger. She acted on the thought instantly.

"Run, Hugh!" she screamed, in a voice that the young man would be sure to hear. "Run for your life! The Indians are looking for you!"

With a muttered curse, Dutith seized her, and covered her mouth with his hand; but he let her loose directly, and threw himself upon the ground near her.

"You are too late," he said. "You ought to have warned them before they threw down the rock, if you wanted them to get away. I thought it strange that that rock should fall without the help of human hands. When I looked at it, I was quite sure that it had been rolled to the edge and dropped over, and I sent some warriors around the ledge on each side, to look for the men who had done the work. It was a bright thought of yours, to scream and give them warning; but the Indians have surrounded them by this time, and you need not think that they will escape."

Hardly had Dutith finished this sentence, when the yell of the Indians on the ledge told that he had spoken truly, and that they had found and started their game. A few shots followed, and then a yell of triumph, that caused Dutith to look at Emma, with a smile of satisfaction on his face.

"It is just as I told you," said he. "I was sure that they could not escape me. My revenge will be all the sweeter for having been delayed, and the Indians will take particular delight in torturing the men who have given them so much trouble."

Emma made no reply, but put her arms around Laura, who was quite overcome by terror and grief, and awaited with a beating heart the arrival of the Indians and their captives.

The Indians soon made their appearance, and they brought only one prisoner, but that was Hugh Rallston.

"Were there no more?" asked Dutith, who was evidently

disappointed, though his face was lighted up by a smile of triumph as he looked at Hugh.

A warrior explained that there had been one other white man on the ledge; but he had made his escape, although they fired at him, and they had been unable to follow him in the darkness.

"This one is worth more to me than all the rest," said the half-breed. "I would not have lost him for the whole Shawnee country. What do you think of him, young ladies. Isn't he a fine figure of a man to burn at the stake? Would the Indians disfigure his face, do you think, by shooting powder in it? Hasn't he a good scalp to dry in the smoke of a Shawnee lodge? You will be very humble when his torture begins, and will be willing to become my slave to save his life."

"I hope you will be nothing of the kind," put in Hugh. "I hope you will never give this traitorous and foul-mouthed villain the pleasure of knowing that he has frightened you. Have no fear for me. God himself has once delivered me from the power of this man, and will rescue me again."

"You think so?" passionately exclaimed Dutith. "We will soon reach the Shawnee towns, and then you can call upon God as much as you please. You will have cause enough to call upon some one; but no one can help you then. Do you suppose I have forgotten the time when you beat me like a dog? It is my turn now, and you may be sure that I will pay my debt with interest."

Hugh treated the half-breed's outburst with silent contempt. Emma and Laura could only look piteously at their brother and lover, who was then taken, by the direction of Dutith, down into the hollow, where he was securely bound to a sapling.

The half-breed, after indulging in a little abuse of his prisoner, was called away to the cavern, where his presence was required.

The Indians who were at work at the cavern had at last reached the interior, and a sickening sight was presented when they discovered the bodies of the warriors who had been in there at the time of the explosion. Most of them had been near the entrance, and the mass of loosened rock

had fallen upon them, crushing them out of all semblance of humanity. There were but three who had not been killed outright. One of them was so badly mangled that he was dead when discovered, and another expired soon after being brought out into the air. The third was uninjured by the explosion, but had been suffocated, and was senseless when he was found.

The Shawnees, who had hoped to find their comrades alive, were highly indignant at their loss. Twelve of their number had been killed, and others were badly wounded, not to mention those of Night-Hawk's party who had perished at the cavern, and it was no wonder that they were angry. As they passed the tree to which the prisoner was bound, their curses were both loud and deep, and they plainly intimated their desire to take vengeance upon him for their misfortune; but Hugh Rallston did not appear to be frightened by their words or actions. He expected no mercy from them, and believed that they would have been no more ready to show him favor if he had not been instrumental in causing the death of some of their number.

The Shawnees had not finished the work of burying the mangled remains of their comrades, when there was an alarm in the camp, caused by the approach of a mounted man, who came riding rapidly down the trail from the north.

As he was but one man, he was allowed to come on without being challenged, and soon galloped in among the Shawnees, presenting to their astonished eyes the unusual spectacle of a British officer, riding alone and at night, through that wild country.

All gathered around him, and questioned him eagerly—especially Captain Dutith, in whom the new-comer was glad to recognize a compatriot.

He hastened to dismount and to tell his story, which was highly interesting to his auditors, for more reasons than one.

He was Captain Cumberford, of the British army, and had come from Canada through Detroit and Fort Miami, on a special mission to the Indians, to make arrangements for a combined attack on the settlements of Kentucky and Western Virginia. That very night, not an hour ago, as he was camped in the forest with his escort of four Indians, they

were attacked by a party of white men, who surprised and instantly killed all of his escort. Being near his horse, which was ready saddled and bridled, he had mounted and made his escape, the white men being on foot and unable to follow. He had rode blindly through the woods, until he perceived the light of the Shawnees' camp-fire, to which he hastened for refuge.

His uniform was sufficient proof that he was what he claimed to be; but he also produced letters and other documents, which he showed to Captain Dutith, who was entirely satisfied, and was glad to meet him. In fact, he was cordially welcomed by all, and was invited to make himself at home.

Perceiving a white man bound to a sapling, the visitor inquired who he was, and advanced toward him.

Hugh Rallston could not help giving a start, in his surprise at recognizing Henry Ewing, there in the Shawnee camp, in the guise of a British officer; but he controlled himself, at a warning gesture from Ewing.

Dutith gave an account of the capture of the prisoner, and was proceeding to relate the occurrences that had led to it, when he was stopped in the midst of his narration by Captain Cumberford.

"We are wasting time here in talking," said the latter, "when we ought to be acting. It is not far from here that I was attacked, and I believe that the Indians might easily find those white men and kill or capture them. There were not more than half a dozen of them, and it is not likely that they will leave that place before daylight."

"Perhaps a portion of the party that attacked you may be the very men I am searching for," remarked Dutith. "If you can tell me where your misfortune occurred, I think we will be able to find them, and I will set the Shawnees on their track at once."

Captain Cumberford easily described the glen through which the war-trace ran, so that Dutith had no difficulty in recognizing it. Telling his visitor to amuse himself as he pleased, Dutith hastened to organize a war-party to go on the trail of the white men.

This conversation had been held near the tree to which

Hugh Rallston was bound, and Cumberford had raised his voice, when he gave his description of the glen, so that the prisoner heard every word.

As soon as Dutith was out of sight, he stepped to the tree and quickly cut Rallston's bonds with a sharp knife, whispering to him as he did so :

" Watch your chance, and slip off. You can easily find your way to the place I spoke of, and tell our friends to lay a trap for the war party."

Captain Cumberford acted and spoke so quickly that he could not be suspected of holding any communication with the prisoner. Having accomplished his object, he turned away and joined the main party of Shawnees, among whom Dutith was drumming up volunteers for his expedition.

The half-breed had no difficulty in inducing the Shawnees to engage in an enterprise that promised them a cheap revenge, and in a short time fifteen men, led by a brave and skillful warrior, were ready to leave the camp.

Just as they were about to start, an outcry was raised, as it was discovered that the prisoner was missing. He had been so securely bound, that it was not considered possible for him to escape, and he had taken the precaution to carry away the fastenings that had been cut, so that it could not be told how he had managed to get loose. The Shawnees had been so intensely interested in the expedition that was being organized, that they had no thought of the prisoner, and no one knew when or how or in what direction he had disappeared.

Captain Dutith was in a terrible rage, and distributed his curses right and left among the Indians, for their negligence in permitting the prisoner to escape. In his anger he had the sympathy of Cumberford, who declared that he had noticed, when passing near the prisoner, that he seemed to be carelessly secured, and had intended to speak about it. This was accepted as the correct version of the affair by Dutith, in spite of the protestations of the Shawnees that no captive was ever fastened in a more thorough manner.

The half-breed did not permit his wrath to run away with his reason. Hoping to effect the capture of Rallston's companions, he hurried off the war-party, and then sent out scouts to search the woods for the missing prisoner.

CHAPTER XIV

THE WAR-PARTY'S SPOILS.

· **ANOTHER** score for Arthur Dutith to settle."

Those who beheld Gideon Wingate's eyes and the wild expression of his countenance when Sol Steele announced that there was another score for Dutith to settle, were convinced that he only needed an opportunity to close accounts with the wretch who had decoyed his boat, and had caused the death of his son and the loss of his daughter.

He snook his fists vengefully, muttering a half-audible imprecation, and then his countenance changed.

"My daughter!" he exclaimed. "She still lives. God has been merciful to me. But she is in the power of the Shawnees, and of that hellish villain. What can I do to rescue her?"

"Nothin', jest now," replied Steele. "The British ossifer that we sent down among the Shawnees may l'arn suthin', or may fix up some way far us to be of use; but thar's no sign of an openin' yet."

"My time will come; I am sure of it; and that foul wretch will be punished for his crimes."

"We all hope so. Thar's more'n one got an account to settle with him. Whatever may happen, we must have patience, and musn't make any keerless move. I wish that Hugh and Joe had come with us, 'stead of stayin' down yonder at the ledge."

"Joe is a very careful hand," suggested Pirtle.

"'Tain't Joe I'm skeered about, but Hugh. He will be wan in' to keep his eyes on Miss Laura, and the red-skins may git sight of him. But it won't do no good to worry. We had better lie down here and try to git some sleep afore mornin'—all but one of us. I reckon Pirtle can stand watch."

Steele's companions accepted his suggestion, and laid down; but none were in the humor for sleeping, the late exciting oc-

currences having made them wakeful. If they had slept, they would soon have been aroused, as they had been lying down but a short time when a man was observed prowling about the glen, who proved to be Joe Proctor. He was joyfully welcomed, and was overwhelmed with inquiries concerning what had happened and why he was alone.

"Don't all speak at once," said Proctor. "Hugh ain't with me because he is took, and I will tell you how he was took if you will give me a chance to talk. Hugh and I looked over the edge of the cliff, down thar, and we saw the Injuns and that ar' Dutith and the two gals. The Shawnees had gone to work to move the pile of stun' that had tumbled down, and thar was a big rock right at the edge that was powerful loose. It was a mighty temptation, as it was jest over thar heads, and Hugh and me fetched it a shove, and over it went, and drapped right down among the Injuns. Thunderation! how it scatter'd 'em! It smashed a few of 'em, I reckon, and they set up a nation of a howlin'.

"Jest then we ought to have left thar, and so I told Hugh; but he said he wanted to see what damage had been done; though the fact was, I reckon, that he couldn't git his eyes off the gals. So we stayed, until I heerd suthin' scramblin' about on the ledge, and jest then Hugh's sister yelled to us, all of a sudden, and told us to run. The Injuns had gone around the ledge, and had sneaked up on us quietly. We both started to run, and I jest more'n tumbled down the rocks and into the brook, though they fired at me right peart; but they got Hugh.

I kep' up the branch a ways, and then struck into the timber, and got out of the way; but I lost myself, and didn't know whar to look for you folks, and jest wandered about in the woods for a long time. How I ever happened to stumble onto you is more'n I can tell. Jest my darned fool luck, I reckon."

The capture of Hugh Radiston cast a gloom over the party. Not only did they feel the loss of one of their best men, but they knew that Dutith and the Shawnees, eager to take vengeance upon him, would show him no mercy. His fate seemed to be settled, and his death could not fail to be accompanied by the severest torture.

While they were lamenting his capture, and debating all sorts of possible and impossible plans for effecting his rescue and that of the girls, they were most agreeably surprised by the appearance of their missing comrade himself. He had easily followed the route that Henry Ewing had so accurately described to Dutith, and had made all possible speed to reach the glen, running so fast that he was quite breathless and unable to answer his friends when they hailed him.

He was plied with questions even more vigorously than Proctor had been, and answered them briefly, as soon as he had taken breath, simply stating that he had been set free by Henry Ewing, who was in the Shawnee camp in the guise of a British officer.

"We have no time to talk," he said. "Action is the word now. Henry Ewing has persuaded Dutith to send a war-party out to capture you fellows, and he told me to hurry to this place and tell you to lay a trap for them. I have run all the way like a scared wolf; but they will soon be here."

"How many are in the party?" asked Steele.

"Haven't the least idea. I had no time to look about or to ask questions. Harry knows what he is about, I suppose."

"Reckon he does, and he won't be likely to send more than we can manage. But they will be double our number, anyhow, and we will have to do good work. It is lucky that Harry left his rifle here, though, as you will need it. I reckon, boys, that we had better move down yonder to the bresh, whar we war when we struck the ossifer and his Injuns. It's the best hidin'-place that I've noticed hereabout."

The six men moved down the hill, and stationed themselves behind the clump of bushes which they had previously used as a shelter. All were eager for the fray, and did not allow themselves to doubt that they would triumph in the expected contest.

"It's goin' to be by quick loadin' and firin' that we will win the fight, if we do win it," said Steele; "and you must have everythin' ready, so as not to waste a second when the shootin' begins."

The scout's advice was heeded, and the preparations of the party were made none too soon, as a low "hist" from their leader shortly informed them that their foes were in sight.

A few Indians came stealthily and silently into the glen, looking warily about, as if anticipating an ambush or searching for an unseen enemy. At a little distance behind these scouts walked the main body of warriors.

As they passed a point where the moonlight fell full upon them, the white men were able to see them plainly and to count them.

"Thar's fifteen or sixteen of 'em," whispered Steele. "They'll be sure to stop down thar whar the dead Injuns are lyin', and then we will give 'em Bunker Hill. Every man must make sure of his shot, and then must load in jest no time."

As Steele had expected, the Shawnees stopped at the bodies of their slain comrades. The scouts in advance were first attracted by them, and, after examining the locality and looking about for enemies, beckoned to their comrades, who were soon gathered at the spot.

The white men, with their rifles pointed through the bushes, and each with his ramrod and his charger full of powder ready at hand, waited for the word. A great deal of jabbering and gesticulation ensued among the savages, some of whom knelt to examine the tracks that were plentiful near the bodies.

They were in a huddle together when Steele's low whistle gave the signal to fire, and the six rifles spoke at once.

The effect of the discharge was as if a lightning bolt had fallen among the Shawnees. The warrior who led the party was one of the fallen, and those who were uninjured hastened to make their escape from the fatal spot, but were rallied until they could fire a volley into the bushes. Then they scampered away, to seek cover and reload.

Lying in a little gully, on the edge of which grew the bushes that sheltered them, the white men were untouched by the bullets that whistled near them. They had nearly reloaded when the volley was fired, and again poured the contents of their deadly rifles into the backs of the Indians as they ran to cover.

This quick work completed the consternation of the Shawnees, who doubtless imagined their enemies to be double their actual number. Without making any further attempt

to seek shelter or to reload their weapons, they ran out of the pass and down the trail as fast as their legs would carry them.

With loud shouts the white men emerged from their concealment and ran down the slope, joyful in their victory, and only sorry that their guns were empty, so that they were unable to send their parting blessing after their enemies. They did not attempt pursuit, as the Indians had too fair a start, hardly looking back as they continued their rapid retreat.

Then ensued the sickening work of putting an end to those who were not already dead. Eight of the war-party had fallen, and there was no danger that the remainder would return to renew the contest.

"'Twas the skeer we give 'em that did the business," remarked Sol Steele. "We did powerful good work; but they mought have been too much for us, if we hadn't skeered the heads off of 'em at the start."

"We are indebted to Harry Ewing for helping us to this piece of good luck," remarked F-l' u.

"Smart thing in Harry; but I am ' quite so sartin 'bout the good luck, though it's mighty hard luck fur the Injuns. It's astonishin' what a slaughter we have made among them critturs, countin' it all together. If those who went into the cavern never come out, thar must have been a dozen of 'em killed down yonder."

"Fifteen, after Joe and I rolled the rock down upon them," suggested Hugh.

"Call it fifteen. Thar's a dozen here, and that makes e'en-a'most thirty that we have settled, in one way or another. When we git back home, boys, if we ever do git back, we will have suthin' to brag about."

"We will *that*," asserted Joe Proctor.

"Sathin' to brag about, sartain; but the gain to us don't amount to as much as the loss to the Injuns. If we war only on a scout, without any partic'lar business, we mought say that we had done a big job of work; but it don't help to git the gals out of the hands of the Shawnees and that cussed Dutith."

This view of the matter had a discouraging effect upon the party, and no one attempted to controvert it.

"This is what mought be called kerryin' the war inter Afriky," continued the scout; "and it stands to reason that the Injuns will be powerful mad. They ain't goin' to put up with bein' whipped on thar own dunghill, and will hunt us high and low. We won't be able to git nigh the trail ag'in, as they will have the woods full of scouts when they move, and it will be as much as we can do to keep our scalps on our heads. We can't hope to hinder 'em from gittin' to thar towns, and then our chance to help the gals will be slim enough."

The young men could not help but feel the force of these remarks, and anxiously inquired what they should do.

"The fust thing to do is to git out of the way," replied Steele. "The Injuns will be on the move right soon, and will be arter us hot-foot. We had better try to git behind 'em, I think, and thar is a good openin' now fur some fust-rate trail coverin'."

CHAPTER XV.

RESUMING THE TRAIL.

EMMA RALLSTON and Laura Wingate had not failed to see Ewing when he came into the Shawnee camp in the guise of a British officer. After a while they had a better view of him, and both thought that they recognized him.

"If it isn't Harry," said Laura, "it is a man who exactly resembles him; but it can't be Harry, of course."

"It is Harry," replied Emma, whose eyes, naturally keener than her companion's, were sharpened by love.

"But he wears the uniform of a British officer. Can it be possible that he has deserted his country and turned traitor?"

"Harry Ewing a traitor! Don't you know that that is impossible? He has procured that uniform—I can't guess how—and is here for the purpose of helping us; but he is running a fearful risk."

"Captain Dutth appears to be very friendly toward him."

"No doubt, as he believes him to be a British officer

They are talking together quite earnestly, and Harry must have some plan for our benefit, or to help Hugh. Now Dutth has left him, and Harry steps quickly toward Hugh. He stops at the tree. *Laura!*

"What is it?" asked the excited girl.

"I do believe that Hugh is free, that Harry has cut his bonds!"

"Impossible! He was not there a moment."

"Be quiet, and wait, and you will see."

Ewing went toward the north, and in a few minutes the girls witnessed, with intense satisfaction, the escape of Hugh Ballston, who crawled away under the shelter of a mass of undergrowth, and was soon out of sight.

Clasping each other's hands, they uttered prayers of thankfulness for his escape, and continued to breathe prayers for his safety during the search that ensued.

"Do you think they will find him?" timidly asked Laura.

"I hope not," replied Emma. "No, Laura; they will *not* find him. Hugh is a splendid runner, and it is night. Although the moon is shining, they can't follow his trail, and he had a good start. Now you know that Harry Ewing is here, and that he cut Hugh's bonds. Let us pray that he may be able to help us."

"I will pray that he may come to no harm, himself. Seavey was here yesterday evening, and he may recognize him."

"How so? Harry Ewing has been at Harrod's station, and has not visited our settlement since Seavey came there."

"But Seavey was with the party that went to hunt the horses, and Harry joined them somewhere down the river."

"You are right. How stupid I have been, that I did not think of that! I have not seen Seavey to night, but he must be somewhere about the camp."

The uneasiness of the girls was without cause just then, as Seavey had left the camp about nightfall, with Night-Hawk and the remainder of that warrior's party. Their superstitious fears had been so thoroughly aroused by the occurrences at the cavern, that they were actually afraid to remain in the vicinity, and they sought and obtained periods

sion to go on to the town, to make preparations for the reception of the prisoners.

Emma Rallston, not knowing of Seavey's absence, wished that Ewing would come near her, so that she might warn him of his danger and advise him to escape in time, although she feared that Laura, by her recognition of him, might cause his true character to be discovered.

Harry Ewing, probably fearing some indiscretion on his own part, as well as on the part of Emma and Laura, did not trust himself to the recognition of either of them. It had been nearly two months since he had seen Emma, and he was naturally anxious to speak to her, especially when she was in such a perilous position; but he wisely resolved that he would not go near her, until he should have reason to believe that he could do so with safety.

When Dutith had set on foot the search for Hugh Rallston, he spoke of his captives to his visitor, and offered him the privilege of making their acquaintance; but the officer professed a great lack of interest in backwoods beauties, and politely declined the offer.

The Indians who had been sent to recapture the missing prisoner gradually returned from their unsuccessful hunt; and Dutith's rage was so great that the presence of Captain Cumberford did not restrain his curses.

"I would rather have lost a hand than that fellow," he said. "I have a grudge against him and all his family. They were pestilent rebels in Virginia, and did great harm to the cause of the king. One of those girls that I brought from Kentucky is his sister. It is very strange that he got loose as he did."

"I am quite sure that he was carelessly tied."

"The Shawnees had good reason to keep him secure. But I will get him again. He will doubtless try to join his friends, the same men who attacked you."

"If he has joined those people, he has got into trouble by this time. I am sure that they were not more than six in number, and your sixteen warriors, if they can be relied upon for any thing, will give a good account of them."

"I am sure that they will."

To give the lie to the confident assertions of both the

officers, one of the Shawnees who had escaped from the massacre at the glen came running into the camp, closely followed by his companions.

It was speedily known that the war-party had been defeated, with the loss of more than half their number, and the intelligence caused the greatest excitement among the Indians.

The first arrivals reported that they had been attacked from an ambush by at least a dozen men, that their chief had been killed at the first fire, and that their loss had been so sudden and so great that they had been unable to resist, and had fled for their lives. The last comer was certain that the number of their enemies was exaggerated, and that it was the surprise that caused the defeat of the war-party. He had not been too badly frightened to look back while retreating, and had counted only six white men. The statement of this man agreed with that of Captain Cumberland, who was sure that there had been not more than half a dozen men in the party that attacked him and his escort.

Captain Dutch had very little to say upon the subject. His vocabulary of oaths was nearly exhausted, and he had none left that were strong enough for the occasion. Ill luck seemed to have overtaken him. His schemes were falling through, and he had brought defeat and disgrace upon the Indians. True, the disasters had happened through no fault of his; but they had happened in the attempt to execute his plans, and he was to a considerable extent responsible for them.

The escape of Hugh Rallston and the discomfiture of the war-party troubled him greatly. Had the defeat of the sixteen warriors been caused by carelessness or cowardice, or had the missing prisoner reached his friends in time to give them information of the force that had been sent against them? The last supposition was very unreasonable; but it might be true. The ambush had certainly been laid as if the white men had expected the Shawnees and had prepared for them.

The half-breed had a consultation with the chief and some of the principal warriors, at which Captain Cumberland was present. It was agreed that the party should at once go on

to the Shawnee town, without stopping for any other enterprise whatever. They would send scouts in advance and on each flank, to guard against an attack, but would do nothing more until they should reach the town. Then, if Captain Dutith could persuade any Indians to help him search for his enemies, he would be welcome to do so; but the warriors there present did not hesitate to admit that they were infected with the superstitious dread that had taken so strong a hold upon Night-Hawk and Seavey. The chief declared that he was willing to fight men, but it was useless to strive againsts evil spirits.

Dutith acquiesced in this decision, knowing that it would be useless to argue against it. He had the two girls in his power, and that was a great point gained, both for his revenge and for what he called his love. He was sure that their lovers and friends would not return to Kentucky without attempting a rescue, and he hoped that such an attempt would lead to their capture.

Day was beginning to break when the fugitives from the glen arrived, and the sun was rising when the Shawnees were ready to leave the fatal hollow and resume their march toward the north.

The captives were mounted, and were placed, as usual, in the middle of the line of march. They had reason to suspect that some new misfortune had happened to the Indians, but could not guess what it might be. Hugh had escaped, Seavey was not to be seen, Ewing was safe so far, and they had cause for thankfulness, if not for hope.

During the march Henry Ewing approached them occasionally, coming near enough to exchange glances and slight gestures of recognition, but did not venture to speak to them, or make any further demonstrations.

Scouts were sent in advance and on each side of the main body, as had been agreed upon, to guard against the possibility of another ambush, and the party soon reached the glen which had already witnessed two disasters.

The fugitives had corroborated Captain Cumberford's account of the destruction of his escort, by saying that they had found in the glen the bodies of the four Indians whom he had represented as having been killed, and the four were still

there, together with the eight victims of the subsequent massacre.

Dutith and the Shawnee chief were convinced, after a careful examination of the "sign" in the vicinity, that there had been not more than half a dozen men in the party that defeated the sixteen warriors, and fresh curses were vented over the disgrace of that defeat. A few picked scouts were sent to follow up the trail that the white men had made as they left the glen, and the remainder of the Shawnees proceeded to bury the bodies of their slain comrades.

While they were engaged in this task, they happened upon a newly-made grave, and upturned the body of a white man, nearly destitute of clothing, who had been shot through the head.

Dutith was somewhat puzzled by this discovery, and asked Captain Cumberford whether any of the white men had been killed in the attack upon his party.

Cumberford was sure that nothing of the kind had occurred then, as his Indians had been slain before they could use their weapons, and suggested that the man must have fallen during the late attack, when the Shawnees had fired into the bushes.

"I suppose it must be so," replied the half-breed; "but there is something strange about it. His comrades would bury him, of course; but I can't imagine why they should strip him. He doesn't look like one of those Kentuckians. The little clothing that is left on him is of fine quality, and he has light hair, reddish whiskers, and a fair complexion."

Captain Cumberford professed himself unable to solve these doubts. In fact, for his part, he could not understand why there should be any doubts. If the man was not one of the attacking party of whites, who could he possibly be? Dutith could not answer, and contented himself with remarking that there was something strange about it. One of the Shawnees settled the question to his own satisfaction by appropriating the scalp of the corpse, which was then left for the wolves and the buzzards, while those of the red-men were buried.

The scouts who had been sent on the trail of the white men came in and reported that they had traced it until it entered a brook, and had not thought it worth while to follow it

any further, as the men who made the trail had evidently gone south.

The Shawnees again took up their line of march, and reached their town before nightfall.

CHAPTER XVI.

CINDY, THE SCOUT.

THE people of Kentucky were thoroughly aroused by the Indian invasions of 1780. The defeat of the previous year, when they had made an unsuccessful incursion into the country of their enemies, combined with the capture of Martin's and Ruddle's stations, and other outrages which they had been compelled to endure, had exasperated them to such a degree that they determined to take such vengeance upon their blood-thirsty foes as would put a stop to further depredations.

To this end a regiment of mounted riflemen was organized under the leadership of Colonel George Rogers Clark, an officer who, in the course of his long and glorious career, was never defeated. The rendezvous was at the mouth of the Licking, and the invading force was joined by many who, although exempt from military duty, were anxious to serve as volunteers in the expedition.

Among these was Colonel Rallston, who hastened to the rendezvous with all the men who could be spared from his station. He had no fear that those he left behind would be molested during his absence, as the invasion of their own country would prevent the Indians from sending any parties to harass their neighbors across the river.

In command of the regiment of mounted men he found Colonel Clark, a gentleman of commanding appearance and soldierly bearing, to whom he made known his purpose of joining the expedition.

"I will be glad to have your assistance," said Clark; "but I can offer you no command, as our officers are all chosen and assigned to their positions."

"I want no command, colonel, and will be thankful enough for the privilege of accompanying you as a volunteer. A party of Shawnees, led by a half breed Tory officer, have carried away my daughter and another who was as dear to me as my daughter. My son is in the Indian country, with several of his friends, and I fear that they may have been killed or captured. I am only anxious for the expedition to make an early start."

"We will soon be on our way, and will move with the utmost possible rapidity. We will strike quick and hard, and you may be sure that we will go through the Shawnee towns. We may not reach them in time to save your friends; but we will do our best."

Not far from Colonel Clark and Rallston stood a tall, powerful and fine-looking man, with light hair and mild blue eyes, leaning on his rifle, and looking across the Ohio with an eager, longing gaze, as if anxious to cross the stream and explore the forest on the other side.

As he stood there, he was approached by a woman, tall, lean and sallow, but with bright gray eyes and a determined cast of countenance, roughly dressed in a coarse linsey gown, that might have been patterned after a meal-bag. In her right hand she held a rifle, and in her mouth was a cob-pipe with a short stem.

The man recognized her as she approached, and accosted her:

"Why, Cindy Steele! Is this you, old lady? What are you doing here?"

"It's me, Cap'n Kenton, and I'm here on business."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that when you go up arter them Shawnee riptiles, I mean to be one of the crowd. My old man is up thar among 'em, and I am goin' to look arter him."

"Better not, I reckon."

"Better had, I reckon. Thar's more'n him to be looked arter, too. I s'pose your comp'ny takes the lead—don't it?"

"Of course it does."

"Then Cindy Steele belongs to that comp'ny. You needn't fear that I will git in the way, Cap'n Kenton."

"I am not afraid of that, old lady. I know that you are

as good on the trail or in a fight as most of the men, and I know, too, that if your head is set on going, you will go. As far as I am concerned, you are heartily welcome."

"That's all I want to know."

By the silent and rapid marches that were characteristic of that truly great commander, Colonel Clark led his brigade up the Missouri valley, right on the heels of the last band of savages that had ravaged Kentucky.

Near the close of a very dark night, we find the extreme advance, composed of Captain Kenton's company of mounted riflemen, approaching the first Shawnee town that lies on their route. They have left their horses concealed in a hollow, at a safe distance from the probable scene of action, and are approaching the town quietly and cautiously, under cover of the darkness and the forest, for the purpose of ascertaining the exact position of the enemy, and of learning whether the designs of Colonel Clark have been fathomed or suspected.

The scouts move in an irregular line, too far apart to be visible to each other, but near enough to hear the signals which they have established, and with which all are well acquainted. At the right of the line is Sol Steele's "old woman," with a rifle in her hand, and without her pipe. She is too good a scout to smoke in the presence of the enemy, and she is hunting Shawnees and looking for her "old man."

To the right she hears nothing. Kenton's men move so noiselessly that not the breaking of a twig or the rustling of a leaf is audible. She is as velvet-footed as any of them, and scarcely hears her own tread. It is so dark that she can see nothing before her. Her sense of feeling guides her, together with that strange instinct which is peculiar to human dwellers in the forest, as well as to wild animals.

After a while she does hear something, and she suddenly stops and listens. As she does so, the noise, if there were any, ceases, and she is doubtful whether she heard any thing.

Again she advances, moving more silently and cautiously than ever. Again she stops, as she hears the same noise, and again it ceases. But she is convinced that she has heard a footfall, and her senses are sufficiently acute to distinguish the tread of a man from that of a beast.

As she stops there, at the trunk of a dead tree, she has settled the matter in her mind. It is a man who has been moving near her. He is aware of her presence. He supposes her to be an enemy. He has made a misstep. He is waiting for another movement on her part. Who and what can he be?"

From her slightly-parted lips comes the chirp of a cricket, shrill, but faint. There is no answering chirp, and she knows that her unseen neighbor is not one of Kenton's men. It must be an Indian, and she prepares for the inevitable conflict, by changing her rifle to her left hand, and drawing from her belt a sharp knife. Whatever may happen, not a shot must be fired. An outcry or any thing that would alarm the sleeping Shawnees, would insure the destruction of some of her friends, and might defeat the object of the expedition.

She breathed a brief prayer, thought of her "old man," and moved as if she had again begun to advance. There was a rustling, nearer than before, and a dark form rose from the ground, and launched itself at her. The attack was much more sudden than she had expected, and she was obliged to save herself by stepping behind the dead tree. There was a muttered exclamation from her antagonist; but it was in the English tongue, and was an exclamation that sounded familiar to her.

"Who's that?" hissed Cindy Steele, intensely excited.

"If you are a white man, speak!" was the reply.

"Sol Steele! is it you?"

"My God! if it ain't Cindy!"

"Yes, it's me, old man, and thank God that we are both safe!"

"Whar did you come from, and what are you doin' here?"

"Hush, and I'll tell you."

In the fewest possible words Cindy Steele explained the position of affairs.

"Are Kenton's men scattered along here?" asked Sol.

His wife nodded, and pointed out the position of the line.

"They musn't go no farder. Can you stop 'em?"

From Cindy's lips came the cricket's chirp, loud and shrill this time, and ending with a quick and sharp note.

It was repeated from various points, and soon a step was

beard, and Captain Kenton came to where the old couple were standing.

He was agreeably surprised at meeting Sol Steele then and there, and asked what had been the cause of the signal to stop the advance of the scouts.

"Thar's no use in goin' on any further, and you mought run ag'inst suthin'," replied the old man. "Thar's one varmint prowlin' about here, that I know of, and thar may be more. I can tell you all you want to know about the town and the Injuns."

"Tell me something about yourself," requested Kenton.

It did not take the old man long to give a succinct account of the adventures of himself and his companions.

"The boys ain't fur from here," he said, in conclusion, "and they are well hid. Suthin' in the air told me that somebody was about, and I crep' out to look around. I come on one chap, and who do you think he was, Cindy?"

"Dutith?"

"Not quite; but it was his right-hand man. That sneak-in' cuss, Seavey, tried to sell the boys out to the Injuns. He p'isoned thar victuals, and come nigh gittin' 'em killed or caught. I wish we could kill or ketch him."

"Perhaps we can," said Kenton. "If you can tell us where to find him, we can try."

"I can find out whar he is, in half a shake of a sheep's tail. I can see in the dark, jest like a painter, though I didn't see Cindy till I got holt of her. Wait here a minute."

The old scout crept away, and soon returned.

"He is right thar," he said, pointing at the outline of a tall and straight hickory sapling. "He is leanin' against the trunk of that tree, and listenin'. Thar was an Injun with him awhile ago; but the Injun has gone back to the town, I reckon."

"We will catch him," said Kenton. "My men will get around between him and the village, and you can close in from this side when we give the signal."

But a few words were needed to complete the arrangements, and Kenton left the old couple, and went along the line of his men. Not one of them had moved from the position he occupied when Lucinda Steele gave the signal that

stopped the advance, and they were soon found and set in motion.

Seavey, as Sol Steele had said, was standing at the trunk of a hickory sapling, listening intently. He had heard some strange and unusual sounds there in the woods, and was anxious to know what they meant. The Indian who had come out with him had laughed at his apprehensions, and had returned to the village; but Seavey was not satisfied, and hoped to make some discovery for which he would be commended. He took his station, therefore, at the hickory tree, and listened for a repetition of the strange sounds.

He heard, among other sounds, the chirping of a cricket, and he heard it again, with a peculiar note, unlike the ordinary cry of the insect. The chirping was repeated again and again, and then all was silent for a while. He kept his position, and again heard the chirp; but this time it was behind him, then in front and on each side. He might have thought that the crickets were holding a carnival, as he waited for further developments.

Then there was a rustling near him, and a suspicious shaking of a bush, and he bent down to listen and look more closely.

As he bent, a dark form threw itself upon him, bearing him to the ground. Another seized him from the front, covering his mouth with a broad hand.

"If you make the least noise, you are a dead man!" was hissed in his ears.

As he made not even a struggle, the hand was removed from his mouth, and he was raised and quietly led away by his captors.

When he perceived that Sol Steele was one of the party, he began to beg for his life, offering to give all the information that could be asked for, and told how and in what part of the town Emma Rallston and Laura Wingate were imprisoned.

"Is thar a British ossifer in thar, named Cumberford?" asked Steele.

"I've heerd of him, but hain't seen him," replied the spy.

"I'm glad of *that*, and don't want to hear any thin' more from you."

Captain Kenton directed some of the men to take the prisoner back to Colonel Clark, but to caution the colonel not to place implicit confidence in what the man might say.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SHAWNEES AT HOME.

HENRY EWING succeeded in reaching the Shawnee town, with Dutith and the rest of the party, without having his identity revealed by either of the captive girls, or by any one else. If Dutith had any suspicions—and he occasionally cast some strange glances at his fellow-Briton—he kept them to himself.

Perhaps the pseudo Captain Cumberland owed his immunity from discovery, in good part, to the carefulness with which he kept from communicating with the young ladies, except at a distance, or by the exchange of a word or two now and then. His air and tone, when he did speak to them, were such as might have been used by an entire stranger, and they took pains to imitate him—especially Emma, who taught her companion caution in the use of her eyes, as well as her tongue. Anxious as Emma was to see her lover and converse with him, and constantly as the sense of his danger pressed upon her mind, she manifested no desire for his company, and treated him with the coolness that she might naturally be supposed to feel toward a stranger and an enemy of her country.

She expressed her anxiety but once, when he reined up his horse at her side for a few minutes.

"Where is Seavey?" she asked. "He will know you when he sees you."

"I am thinking of that," replied Henry. "He has gone on to the town."

"But you will see him, if you stay with us. You are risking too much. What will you do when you meet him?"

"I haven't made up my mind. I am thinking about it."

"You had better not think too long, or you may be lost. You must escape before it is too late."

"I can not leave you," replied Ewing. Then, as he caught the glance of Dutith, he rode away.

He meant what he said when he told the captives that he could not leave them; but he did not know how he could stay with them and live. If he should reach the Shawnee town, and should find Seavey there, discovery would be inevitable, and he did not need to be reminded of the fate that awaited him in that event.

How to avoid that fate was a question which he had often asked himself, and which he had not been able to solve to his satisfaction. Should he deny Seavey's assertions and face him down? It was more than probable that such an attempt would not be successful, especially as it was evident that Dutith's suspicions had been aroused. There was a chance that Sol Steele and his party might do something to help him; but it was the merest chance, and it was idle even to think of it.

It must be confessed that Harry Ewing had come to the conclusion to "trust to luck," to go on and take his chances. If an emergency should arise, he hoped that he would be equal to it, that some inspiration would tell him what to say or do; but he was utterly unable to map out the course of conduct that he intended to pursue.

"You seem to have made the acquaintance of my fair prisoners," said Captain Dutith, when Ewing joined him. "What do you think of them?"

"They are well enough, I suppose; but I never fancied these sun-browned beauties of the backwoods."

"You are quite brown yourself, Captain Cumberford. You have no advantage of them in that particular."

"True enough. I have seen a great deal of exposure during my service in the colonies."

"You are much darker than that backwoodsman whom we found buried in the glen below. If it had not been for the uniform, I would have supposed him to be the British officer, and you the American."

Harry Ewing laughed, but felt that his laugh sounded forced and unnatural.

"I wish that my man Seavey had been with us when we found the body," continued Dutith. "He would have known whether it was one of those people with whom he started from Kentucky. If it was not one of them, I can't imagine who it could have been. It is not possible that there are any other parties of Americans prowling about in these woods."

"What do you expect to do with the Kentucky girls?" asked Ewing, who was anxious to change the subject.

"One of them I will marry, if she is willing to become my wife. If she is not willing, why—ha, ha! What's the matter, Cumberford?"

Captain Cumberford's face flushed crimson as he turned it from the keen gaze of Dutith.

"I thought I saw a buck in the edge of the woods yonder," said he. "I must go and try to get a shot at him."

"There is something wrong about that fellow," muttered Dutith, as his companion rode away.

When the Shawnees arrived at their village, Dutith hastened to get his prisoners into a place of safety, as if he feared that an attempt at their rescue might be made, from some unknown quarter, and in some unexpected manner. He caged them in a stout log-building, near the center of the town, with a stout door and no windows, which had previously been used for the safe-keeping of prisoners. Into this Emma and Laura were led, were provided with blankets and furs for a couch, and their supper was brought in to them.

A guard was placed at the door, and the half breed went to make inquiries concerning Seavey. He discovered, greatly to his vexation, that that individual had gone on a hunt, accompanied by an Indian, and it was not known when he would return.

Henry Ewing had watched these details, and had contrived to be near Dutith when he imprisoned the girls and made his inquiries concerning Seavey. He was naturally rejoiced at hearing that the spy was absent, though he hastily formed a plan, which he meant to put into execution on Seavey's appearance, intending to pick a quarrel with him, the result of which would probably have made an end of Seavey.

As Dutith soon retired for the night, after showing Captain

Cumberford the lodge to which he had been assigned, the latter thought that he, also, might safely get a little sleep. Before lying down, however, he casually walked by the prison-house, and slipped through a chink of the building a note which he had written, informing the girls that he was still present, in the hope of devising some means of saving them, and that Seavey was not in the village.

Having thus, as he hoped, cheered and comforted them a little, he laid down, intending to awake and rise at midnight, not knowing what he would then do, but still trusting to luck, and half-believing that he would yet be inspired with some plan that would enable him to rescue the fair prisoners and get clear of the scrape in which he found himself.

He did not wake at midnight. In fact, it was long after that hour when he arose and looked out of the lodge. As the moon had set, and it was extremely dark, he knew that the night must be near its close, and that he had very little time in which to do any thing, if he had known what to do.

He strolled out, thinking of Seavey, and passed near a couple of Indians, whom he heard mention the name of Dog-face, which he had understood to be the nickname by which the spy was known among the Shawnees. Listening to their conversation, he learned that one of them, named Night-Hawk, had been hunting with Seavey, and had just come in, having left his companion in the woods.

Ewing asked Night-Hawk where he had left Dog-face, and the Indian pointed out the direction in which he might be found. According to Night-Hawk's explanation, Seavey had imagined that some stranger was prowling about in the forest and had stayed behind to investigate the matter.

The young man's resolution was instantly taken. He would go out into the woods and find Seavey. If the spy should recognize him, he must make an end of the spy, so that he would have nothing more to fear from that quarter.

He left the village without attracting the observation of Night-Hawk and the other Indian, carefully examined the condition of his weapons, and went on his march.

The night was so dark that he did not expect to be able to see his antagonist, and he felt his way as carefully as he could, in the direction that had been pointed out to him.

He was about a quarter of a mile from the village, surrounded by the dense forest, and covered by the thick darkness, when he thought he heard the murmur of voices ahead.

More cautiously than ever he advanced, until he missed his footing as he stepped over the edge of a steep little incline, and fell down among a number of men who were sitting and lying at the foot of the incline.

Their muttered exclamations, as they seized him and held him firmly, convinced him that he had fallen among friends, and he hastened to make himself known to them.

"What are you doing here, Harry?" asked Hugh Ralston, who was one of the party. "Were you looking for us?"

"No—for Seavey. I had no idea of meeting you."

"What use did you have for that rascal?"

"I was afraid that I would meet him in the village, and that he might recognize me."

"No danger of that now. He is in safe hands, and stands a good chance to get his neck stretched."

Hugh and his companions then briefly explained to Ewing the arrival of Colonel Clark and his regiment, and the projected attack upon the Shawnee town. A body of riflemen had already been sent around to the north of the town, to cut off the retreat of the Indians, and there would be a general advance as soon as they could get into position.

"It must be nearly day," said Ewing, "and I must hurry back to the town. I must be near the girls when the attack is made."

He explained to his friends the situation of the building in which Laura and Emma were imprisoned, so that they might know where to strike when the signal should be given for the onset, and left them.

When he reached the village, there were signs of the coming dawn in the eastern sky, and he knew that what he should do, if he could do any thing, must be done quickly. The danger was that an attempt might be made, at the commencement of the attack, to remove the girls, or that the Indians, in the excitement of combat or the anger of defeat, might summarily dispose of them with the tomahawk. Ewing had determined that he would remain with them and defend them with his life.

He went direct to the prison, and demanded admission of the guards. The two Indians who had been stationed at the door were half asleep, and either supposed him to be Dutith, or believed that they must yield obedience to the commands of a British officer. At all events, they allowed him to enter, without a word in opposition.

The girls were awake, and greeted him warmly when he spoke to them and made himself known. In a few words he explained to them the position of affairs, and rejoiced their hearts by informing them that their friends were at hand, in strong force, ready to destroy their foes and release them from durance. He was there, he said, to stand by them and defend them in any extremity.

He had secured upon his person the pistols that he had taken from the holsters of Captain Cumberland. One of these he gave to Emma, knowing that she could and would use it if occasion should require. The other he retained, together with his knife and a rifle that he had appropriated since reaching the village.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SHORT STRUGGLE.

LAURA WINGATE looked with dismay at the warlike preparations that were made by her two friends within the prison. It is true that there was little to be seen; but she understood them very well, and knew that a perilous moment was approaching. Emma Rallston, who was more intrepid by nature, stood by the side of her lover, with a pistol in her hand, ready to face any danger that might present itself before her.

When a faint light that could be seen through the chinks informed the occupants of the prison of the approach of day, a muttered conversation was heard at the door.

"It is Dutith," whispered Harry. "I will keep him out of here as long as I can. The door opens toward us, and I can hold it for a while."

"Don't try it," entreated Emma. "It will only make him more angry, and he has help enough to open it."

As Harry moved toward the door, she laid her hand upon his arm.

"He may shoot you through the door. Don't go there, dear Harry!"

In her excitement she raised her voice to a higher pitch than prudence would have advised.

"Dear Harry! Ha! ha! ha!"

It was Dutith who spoke, and his sarcastic tone and exultant laugh told the young man that he had been discovered, and that further attempts at concealment were useless.

"Dear Harry!" repeated Dutith. "I will settle with your dear Harry! It is just as I suspected; but your game is ended, young man."

As he spoke, he attempted to open the door; but it did not yield to his hand.

Just then a rifle-shot was heard in the distance, quickly followed by another, in another direction.

"What is that?" exclaimed Dutith. "Who can have fired those shots in the woods?"

He was answered by a yell, that surely did not proceed from Shawnee throats. The yell was repeated from the forest at the north of the town, and was succeeded by shrieks and howls, intermingled with the war-cries of the awakened Indians, as they hastily seized their weapons, and rushed out of their lodges.

There was no mistaking the cause of the tumult. The village was attacked on two sides by the terrible Long-knives, who had stolen upon it unheralded and unperceived. The advance of Colonel Clark's little army was almost in the village when the attack commenced, and several of the Indians were shot down before they could defend themselves.

But the Shawnees were brave and their leaders were skillful. They were not to be easily defeated in their own country and driven from their own homes. Quickly obeying the commands of their chieftains, they were collected at the most available positions, determined to drive back their adversaries, or, at least, to keep them out of the village until they could provide a way of escape for the women and children.

It was quite light when the alarm arose, and the three friends in the prison-house, favored by the chinks between the heavy logs, were able to see each other and to understand what they were doing.

"Our people are here!" exclaimed Harry Ewing, and there was a glad, exultant smile on his face, which was reflected back by the determined countenance of Emma Ballston, and was even answered by timid Laura Wingate, in the corner.

"If we could but keep everybody out until our friends reach us, we would be safe," said Emma. "Laura, you had better crouch down in the corner there, as some one might shoot through that wide chink."

"Just listen to the shots and the shouts!" said Harry. "They are coming nearer."

"I wish you would come away from that door, Harry. You are in great danger while you stand there. What would I not give for something to barricade it with!"

"You need not fear for me. I will keep out of harm's way as much as possible. You must be ready to act when the time comes, as I depend upon your coolness and courage. Here comes Dutith again, and now may God help us!"

The half-breed had not been idle, and had not forgotten his prisoners. Hardly fifteen minutes elapsed between the firing of the first shot and his return to the prison-house. In that time he had ascertained that the advance of the enemy had been checked, that the Shawnees were doing all that could be done to repel the attack, and that the women and children were being gathered together, preparatory to sending them away on the trail that led to the nearest town. He believed that he would have time enough, whatever might happen, to secure his prisoners and take them away, and he took a couple of Indians with him when he hastened back to the prison.

He again tried the door, but it did not yield to his push, and he called on the Indians for help.

"There is only one man holding it," he said, "and two of us can easily push it open."

Dutith flung himself against the door, and a stalwart Shawnee contributed to the effort his heavy frame and strong sinews.

"Stand out of the way, Emma," said Harry Ewing, as he

perceived that the door must yield. "Stand back and on one side. Something will happen directly."

She stepped lightly to one side, and Harry, at the moment when the greatest pressure came upon the door, quickly jumped back.

The door flew open, admitting a rush of light, and also admitting Dutith and the Shawnee, who fell forward upon the floor in a heap.

Harry Ewing fired his pistol at the head of the Indian, and pounced upon Dutith as he lay on the floor, at the same time drawing his knife from his belt.

The three Shawnees who had been left outside hastened to take a part in the combat; but the first who attempted to enter the door received the contents of Emma Rallston's pistol in his breast, and fell forward, striking against Ewing, and nearly knocking him over.

A wild cry broke from the lips of Laura Wingate, as another Indian burst into the room, over the silent and the struggling forms, who seized Emma by the hair, and raised his tomahawk to strike her down.

Laura did not content herself with screaming. The danger of her friend had aroused the tiger within her. With the quickness of thought she seized Henry Ewing's rifle, that leaned against the wall near her, cocked it, and fired at the Shawnee, without pretending to take aim. As if guided by instinct, the bullet flew to the heart of the red warrior, and laid him low.

Dutith had taken advantage of the fall of the Indian against Ewing to throw off his antagonist, and to plunge a knife into his side. Then he arose and stared wildly about, as if unable to comprehend the situation of affairs.

At that moment a startling cry rose above all the yells of the contending parties outside. The remaining Shawnee took to his heels, and a tall old man dashed in at the prison door nearly upsetting Dutith, and lifted in his arms Laura Wingate, who had fallen upon the floor in a faint.

Dutith had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that he was alone, and that he must lose no time in providing for his own safety. He started toward the door, but was confronted by Sol Steele and his wife. He threw himself upon

the old man, and was met by the point of a knife, that caused him to stagger back with a curse. Then Lucinda Steele's rifle was fired, and the half-breed fell back on the floor struggling in the agonies of death.

"Did you shoot him, Cindy?" asked the scout.

"Don't know. My rifle went off, somehow."

"It must have been a Providence. But that account is settled, any way."

Hugh Rallston and his friends pushed into the prison house, and brought out the girls and Henry Ewing. The stab that Dutith had inflicted upon the latter was a deep one, and he had fainted from loss of blood, but the wound was not necessarily dangerous.

The Shawnees, when they were no longer able to make head against Colonel Clark's little army, sought safety in flight, leaving their town in the possession of the victors, who destroyed it by fire, and ravaged the cornfields. But the Shawnees had fought so obstinately, that seventeen white men had been slain, and their own losses, as far as they could be ascertained, were not much greater.

The expedition devastated several other towns about the head-waters of the Miami, and then returned to the falls of the Ohio, having fully accomplished the purpose for which it was organized.

Of the joy of Laura Wingate at finding the father whom she had supposed to be dead, or of the joy of Emma Rallston and her parents when she was safely restored to them, it is unnecessary to speak. It is sufficient to say that Henry Ewing recovered from his wound, and married Emma Rallston; that Hugh Rallston and Laura Wingate "made a match of it" in due course of time; and that Rallston's station grew and prospered, being never again molested by an Indian incursion.

Sol Steele remained in the Rallston settlement while he lived, and his wife was dignified, during the remainder of her life, with the title of "Captain Cindy."

THE END.

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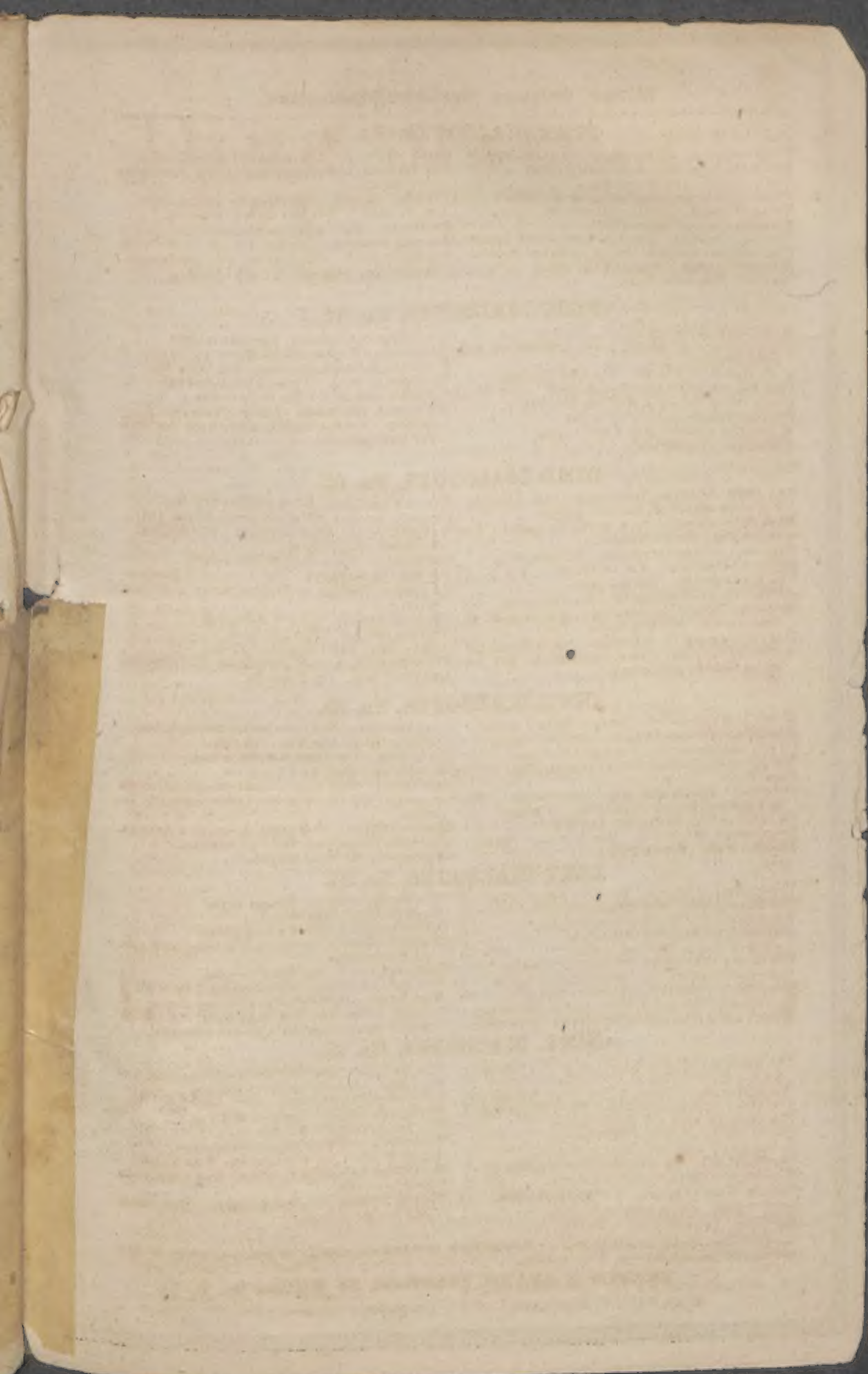
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